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First-Year Teacher Perceptions of Classroom Experiences and Teacher Induction in a Midwestern School District

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FIRST-YEAR TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES AND TEACHER INDUCTION IN A MIDWESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Cheryl Torok Fleming

June 2004

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ABSTRACT

FIRST-YEAR TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES AND TEACHER INDUCTION IN A MIDWESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

by

Cheryl Torok Fleming

Chair: James Jeffery

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

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Title: FIRST-YEAR TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES AND TEACHER INDUCTION IN A MIDWESTERN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Name of researcher: Cheryl Torok Fleming

Name and degree of faculty chair: James Jeffery, Ph.D.

Date completed: June 2004

Problem

The purpose of this study was to discover first-year teacher perceptions of their experiences with classroom teaching and teacher induction in a midwestern school district.

Method

This qualitative study sought to discover how new teachers build knowledge of the context and culture of teaching. Purposeful sampling techniques were used. Participants were delimited to practicing K-6 educators in an Indiana urban school district, completing their first year of experience as classroom teachers. Data collection occurred through semi-structured interviews. The questions focused upon the

development process of beginning teachers, and how an induction program contributed to their development. The interview tapes were transcribed verbatim, and coded using the constant comparative method. Results were verified through review by the participants and by professional educators.

Results

These first-year teachers believed they entered the teaching profession with an adequate knowledge base, yet lacked preparation in classroom management, student discipline, knowledge of children's social issues, and interpersonal skills. A supportive building principal, supportive colleagues, and a positive school culture played an important role in assisting first-year teachers, according to the participants. These first-year teachers believed that human assistance proved more helpful to them than attending meetings or listening to speakers. Human aspects of teaching, such as assisting new teachers to manage time and stress, must be addressed, besides the logistical aspects of planning lessons and obtaining resources. First-year teachers desired to network with other teachers with whom they could share their problems and discuss possible solutions.

Conclusions

Induction programs that successfully assist new teachers to weather their first year in the classroom need to be well organized and planned, with a study of new teacher needs and adult learner characteristics underlying the program. Induction programs should include orientation, mentoring, and on-going staff development; should extend beyond the first year of teaching; and should emphasize improving instruction, leading to

improved student achievement. Induction programs promote new teacher success and improvement only if the participants view the programs as useful and relevant.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> *If a doctor, lawyer, or dentist had forty people in his office at one time, all of whom had different needs, and some of whom didn't want to be there and were causing trouble, and the doctor, lawyer, or dentist, without assistance, had to treat them all with professional excellence for nine months, then he might have some conception of the classroom teacher's job.*
>
> —Donald D. Quinn, *All of the SyRIS Quotes About Education*

"The first day of school!" This simple phrase brings excitement to many, apprehension to others—and sheer panic to a few! Educators often feel a mixture of euphoria and anxiety. One particular group, however, frequently finds more than a minor amount of sheer panic: first-year teachers. The feelings experienced by new teachers have been verified by research into the issues and concerns faced on a daily basis by these newcomers to the teaching profession. In their case studies of first-year teachers, Roehrig, Pressley, and Tallotta (2002) identified 571 different challenges faced by teachers during their first year in the classroom.

Making the transition from scholar to educator certainly holds its share of questions and fears, as well as delights. Moving from the university classroom to one's own schoolroom marks an important and memorable transition point for every educator. The degree of difficulty encountered by first-year teachers throughout this transition depends largely on the effectiveness of the assistance provided to first-year teachers.

An *Education Week* (Edwards, 2000) special report indicated that most first-year teacher induction programs included both school level and corporation level program components. However, the degree to which assistance was provided varied from school to school and corporation to corporation (Breaux & Wong, 2003; Brock & Grady, 2001; Gordon & Maxey, 2000).

As a school administrator at the building level, my job responsibilities have included placing pre-service university students with skilled classroom teachers for observation experiences in the classroom setting. Additionally, I have served as a liaison with area colleges and universities for placing student teachers with veteran classroom educators. My duties as an instructional leader entailed interviewing, hiring, placing, and evaluating first-year teachers, as well as assisting them to make the transition from a novice educator to an effective manager of instructional responsibilities.

Through my interactions with these beginning educators, I often questioned their readiness to assume the responsibilities and stresses of classroom teaching. Were they well prepared for the day-to-day realities of the classroom? Specific areas, such as professionalism, ethics, interpersonal skills, and technology expertise, presented themselves as topics for both inquiry and reflection. What programs and processes could best close the gap between stepping out of the university doors and into the schoolhouse doors? What assistance could schools and school corporations have provided to ensure a better beginning for these students-become-teachers?

Thinking back to 1975, I remembered my own first-year teacher experiences. Basically, my principal showed me the classroom assigned to me, and wished me "good luck." I recalled seeking out my own "mentor" teacher, who later became my teaching

colleague and friend. Other than a brief meeting with my principal, no effective, formal assistance or induction program existed then. These combined experiences led me to focus my research upon the challenges and experiences of first-year teachers. Not only these experiences, but also the effectiveness of one particular first-year teacher induction program in the state of Indiana comprised the essence of this study.

Background of the Study

Researchers Wong (2001) and Portner (2003) both cited the importance of providing assistance to beginners in a variety of professions, such as medicine, culinary arts, skilled trades, and business. These professions often provided this assistance through formal internships or apprenticeships. Other researchers cited in the research literature concurred with these statements (Brock & Grady, 2001; Gordon & Maxey, 2000).

Teaching appears to be one of the professions that lacks adequate training and guidance for entry-level practitioners, even though research has suggested that well-prepared and capable teachers comprise a valuable resource that positively and significantly impacts student learning (Darling-Hammond, 2003). If employers do not transmit the culture, beliefs, and mission to first-year teachers as they join the professional "family," it is difficult to imagine when this training would more appropriately occur. "Given comparisons to fields such as medicine and law, which recognize the needs of new professionals more fully, some observers have dubbed education 'the profession that eats its young'" (Halford, 1998, p. 33). Gordon and Maxey (2000) pointed out that first-year teachers often are expected to possess the same

expertise, and assume the same roles and responsibilities as veteran teachers, yet have received little support, other than to be assigned a mentor.

Other conditions of teaching also affect first-year teacher job satisfaction. Salaries remained low, in comparison to other professions requiring the same amount of education. "Teachers continue to be seen as service personnel who earn less than their similarly educated peers in other professions" (Hallinan & Khmelkov, 2001, p. 177). Due to the shortage of qualified teachers in some areas, some districts have been forced to hire untrained and unprepared individuals. "Teachers are asked to teach in areas for which they are ill-prepared, receive little mentoring or in-service support, and are not evaluated on the high standards designed to improve teaching. These individuals may be required to teach job related skills and technical competence for subjects in which they are only marginally competent" (Hallinan & Khmelkov, 2001, p. 177). This lack of experienced and well-prepared teachers presents an additional cause for concern in relation to the current political climate, in which a primary measure of student learning seems to be student scores on standardized tests. In order to prepare students for success on these tests, teachers themselves should possess an understanding of the standards and concepts on which students will be tested (Hallinan & Khmelkov, 2001; Joyce & Showers, 2003).

A high level of attrition in the first few years of teaching represents a problem that has long occurred in the teaching profession. An *Education Week* (Edwards, 2000) special report on teaching stated that about 30% of novice teachers leave within 3 years; in urban areas, this number may be as high as 50% (Danielson, 1999; Henke, Chen, & Geiss, 2002; Portner, 2003). Unfortunately, the best and brightest of the first-year

teachers, as measured by their scores on college entrance exams, seemed to be most at risk for leaving the profession. According to the report, first-year teachers who scored in the top quartile on college entrance exams were nearly twice as likely to leave the profession as those who scored below the top quartile (Edwards, 2000).

On-the-job support and workplace conditions also affect the likelihood that new teachers will leave the profession. Novice teachers expressing dissatisfaction with the school environment, and in particular with student discipline, were twice as likely to leave as those who were not dissatisfied. In addition, those new teachers who did not participate in an induction program in their schools or school districts were also twice as likely to leave the profession as those who participated in some form of formalized induction (Darling-Hammond, 2003; Edwards, 2000). "New teachers [are] isolated behind classroom doors with little feedback or help, while others [even if they do not drop out of teaching] learn merely to cope rather than to teach well" (Portner, 2003, p. 4).

"Reality shock is the collapse of missionary ideals formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life" (Veenman, as cited in Gordon & Maxey, 2000, p. 5). This sudden realization, coupled with the overwhelming nature of classroom teaching, became a seemingly insurmountable barrier to first-year teacher success. Darling-Hammond and Cobb (1996) described changes in the occupation of teaching that reflect changed societal expectations for schools. These expectations placed additional pressure upon educators to gain a thorough understanding of the many pathways to learning, and to ensure that students gained a strong foundation in thinking skills and problem solving. Additionally, the social setting in which students exist, and the problems they bring to school, provided yet another arena for which first-year teachers

needed to be prepared. Teachers could no longer rely on formulas for testing and evaluation or "teacher-proof" curriculum guides to closely prescribe the lessons and activities utilized in instructing and assessing youngsters.

Moskowitz and Stephens (1997) revealed that first-year teachers in many countries, including Australia, China, New Zealand, and the United States, experienced apprehensions about a variety of different issues that are part and parcel of day-to-day existence in the classroom. In addition, these beginners expressed doubts about their choice of teaching as a profession. Many researchers listed the following common first-year teacher problems: addressing student discipline concerns, understanding school policies and procedures, feeling physically and socially isolated, lacking support, locating needed resources, implementing classroom management plans, relating to parents, communicating with other members of the school community, addressing learning needs of individual students, planning for instruction, and adjusting to the school culture (Brock & Grady, 2001; Danielson, 1999; Flores, 2001; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Greaves, 1991; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Nelson, 1995; Oberski, 1999; Rogers & Babinski, 1999; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000; Tinsley, 1985; Veenman, 1984). Rust and Orland (2001) cited these topics as critical foci for first-year teachers: assessment, classroom management, context and norms of schools, curriculum, getting along, change, keeping a job, and knowledge of children.

Teachers in urban schools experienced these problems, along with a host of other concerns relative to the urban school itself. These concerns included inferior working conditions, lack of professional respect, low morale, and a culture of high faculty turnover (*Recruiting New Teachers*, 2002). An *Education Week* special report (Edwards,

2003) listed students who are unprepared for school; student home conditions, including violence and poverty; and student conduct that interrupts instructional time, as additional urban teacher concerns.

> The often-fractured nature of the students' lives compounds the challenges that new teachers face at [such] schools. Not only must they address a wider spectrum of academic abilities, but they're also confronted with behavior they were never trained to deal with. (Archer, 2003, p. 23)

Metaphors can sometimes capture the overwhelmingly unfamiliar and uncertain nature of the first year of teaching. Ganser's work (1999a) with first-year teachers revealed these enlightening metaphors used by first-year teachers to characterize their beginning experience: "balancing on the edge of a steep cliff," "bungee jumping," "driving down a strange highway at night at 60 miles per hour," "traveling in a foreign land without knowing the language," and "learning to walk on backward-facing feet."

Breaux and Wong (2003), Brock and Grady (2001), and Gordon and Maxey (2000) addressed the challenges faced by an often-overlooked and underserved group of "new" teachers. This group included experienced teachers who changed schools or returned to the profession following an absence. Their maturity and previous experience may have implied that they needed little or no help. These valuable veterans were expected to demonstrate instant competence, although they may have recently relocated from another school, city, state, or profession.

> These are the veteran teachers who have changed schools or districts and who have become newcomers again. The misconception is that they should already know what to do. After all, they are mature and have taught for several years. As a result, they are expected to be instantly competent although they might have made a significant geographic change or might have taken on new and possibly additional responsibilities at the new school. (Brock & Grady, 2001, p. 13)

Although their needs differed from those of beginning teachers, these teachers "in transition" required assistance in learning about the school setting and culture, school policies and procedures, location of resources, and perhaps knowledge about and assistance with navigating a new community. They also needed help with adjusting to the changes that occur whenever an individual experiences job transitions (Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Hartzell, 1994). *Learning the Ropes*, an on-line report, published by Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (2002), stated that not all eligible inductees receive the support they need to be effective in the classroom: "Even experienced teachers embarking on new assignments in new cities or academic disciplines can be sorely tested, especially if they are unfamiliar with urban environments" (p. 1).

Research Problem

According to the United States Department of Education (2000), approximately 19% of first-year teachers left the profession during the first year; when looking at the first 5 years, that number rose to at least 30%. With the increasing national focus on student achievement, the need to attract and keep qualified and dedicated teachers has become ever more important. Research has shown that effective induction programs for beginning teachers can significantly reduce the feelings of stress, isolation, and overwhelming doubt, which are common challenges for new teachers (Brock & Grady, 2001; Gordon & Maxey, 2000). The literature also revealed that some populations of "new" teachers might not be receiving needed assistance (Brock & Grady, 2001; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Hartzell, 1994).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this interpretive study, set within the experiential context of the first-year teacher, was to discover: (a) first-year teacher perceptions of their classroom experiences during their first year of teaching; and (b) first-year teacher perceptions of the role teacher induction programs play in assisting first-year teachers to deal with the challenges of their first year in the classroom.

Research Questions

1. How do first-year teacher challenges and the nature of the school context affect beginning classroom experiences?

2. How did the teacher induction program under study support first-year teachers?

3. How would first-year teachers describe the "ideal" teacher induction program?

4. Which needs of adult learners were most effectively addressed by the teacher induction program under study?

5. Which needs of adult learners did the teacher induction program under study fail to address?

Rationale

Although the state of Indiana mandates induction programs for first-year teachers, the first-year teachers themselves rarely found opportunities to describe the challenges they faced, as well as how induction programs helped them survive their first year in the

classroom. In addition, my pilot study for this research revealed that teacher induction programs appear to be built upon ideas and plans generated by program directors and administrators, without much teacher input. The first-year teachers interviewed for this pilot study stated that they were seldom asked for their input and ideas for planning induction programs that meet the needs of first-year teachers.

An examination of Dissertation Abstracts International revealed only four studies addressing the topic of teacher induction in the Midwest since 1989. The most recent study occurred in 1996, and none of the four studies speak to the specific challenges and needs of first-year teachers.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivism

This study relied on qualitative methodology to advance a constructivist knowledge framework. Seeking to understand the unique challenges and perspectives of new teachers, and grounding these ideas within the school context, provided the foundation of the study. I analyzed statements made by the participants in order to discern specific themes (Creswell, 1998).

The constructivist foundation suggests that individuals seek to develop an understanding of the world in which they live through a study of the lived experiences of individuals. I relied on the participants' views of the situation under study, constructing varied and multiple meanings through interactions with the participants. Constructivist inquirers have generated or inductively developed theories or patterns of meaning (Creswell, 2003). Charmaz, in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000), suggested:

> To seek respondents' meanings, we must go further than surface meanings or presumed meanings. . . .We clarify, rather than challenge, respondents' views about reality. A constructivist approach necessitates a relationship with respondents in which they can cast their stories in their terms. It means listening to their stories with openness to feeling and experience. (p. 525)

Characteristics of Adult Learners: Andragogy vs. Pedagogy

As Knowles (1984) reminded us, pedagogy literally means the art and science of teaching children. Although this model originated centuries ago, it persists today.

> The pedagogical model of education is a set of beliefs—indeed, as viewed by many traditional teachers, an ideology—based on assumptions about teaching and learning that evolved between the seventh and twelfth centuries in the monastic and cathedral schools of Europe out of their experiences in teaching basic skills to young boys. As secular schools started being organized in later centuries, and public schools in the nineteenth century, this was the only model in existence. And so our entire educational enterprise, including higher education, was frozen into the pedagogical model. As a result, adults have by and large been taught as if they were children until fairly recently. (p. 52)

The pedagogical model was based on two assumptions about learners: Other than to pass a course, learners see no need to know the information being taught; and, the learner's self-concept is that of a dependent personality (Knowles, 1984).

In contrast, Knowles described the andragogical model as based on several differing assumptions. He affirmed the idea that adults need to know the "why" of something before they undertake to learn it. Adults view themselves as responsible for their own lives and decisions, and are therefore motivated to learn to the extent that they believe it will help them perform tasks or deal with problems that are related to their life experiences. Finally, he reminded us that adults bring with them to the learning context a great range and quality of experience, requiring different instructional techniques than those needed for children (Knowles, 1984). These techniques bring the experiences of the learner into play through small group discussions, role-plays, simulations, case

studies, and other interactive means. In addition, the rejection or devaluation of these life experiences can lead adult learners to believe that they themselves are being rejected as persons (Knowles, 1984).

However, this wealth of experience also includes a negative side, which affects adults as learners. "As we accumulate experience, we tend to develop mental habits, biases, and presuppositions that tend to cause us to close our minds to new ideas, fresh suppositions, and alternative ways of thinking" (Knowles, 1984, p. 58). Educators of adults, then, try to find ways to encourage adult learners to approach learning with a fresh viewpoint and openness to new ideas.

Joyce and Showers (2003) also described characteristics and needs of adult learners, which significantly impact the success of teacher induction programs, both in promoting the development of quality teaching and in the retention of teachers in the profession. Active involvement of adult learners in new learning, with adequate follow-up and practice, ensures internalization and adoption of the newly learned material. Adults need to see the value of new ideas, and their practical application to the situation at hand. A comfortable and safe setting, with the opportunity to engage with other adults, provides an optimal setting for acquisition of knowledge. "Peer teaching sessions, as well as practice with small groups of children, are safer settings for exploration than a full classroom of real students" (p. 74).

Significance of the Study

This study provided important insights into the experiences of beginning teachers, for university instructors, building-level administrators, and directors of beginning teacher induction programs. These insights will assist those who plan and provide

induction activities for first-year teachers, as they seek to include experiences that hold relevance and applicability for the program participants. Prospective teachers might also find this study interesting and informative, as it describes the challenges encountered by beginning teachers, delineated in their own words.

Definition of Terms

First-Year Teacher: Teachers who are experiencing their first year as a classroom teacher; also referred to as beginning teachers in this study.

Induction: The process of systematically training and supporting new teachers, beginning before the first day of school and continuing through the first 2 to 3 years of teaching.

Mentor: Individual(s) who play(s) a significant role in offering guidance and assistance to beginning teachers.

New Teacher: Includes any teacher who may be new to a corporation, district, school, subject, or grade level.

Teacher Induction Programs: Formal support systems used to help beginning teachers become competent and effective professionals in the classroom (also referred to as Teacher Assistance Programs).

Teacher Intern: A teacher who is being introduced to the teaching profession (also referred to in the research literature as inductee, mentee, or novice).

General Research Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was utilized to gather data for this study. I served as the research instrument, gathering data through semi-structured interviews with

the participants. After informed consent was obtained from each participant, the 60-to-120 minute interviews were tape-recorded, then transcribed verbatim. Data analysis began by coding for emergent themes arising from the interviews; themes were then grouped into categories. Demographic data were obtained during the course of the interview. These data were presented through descriptive statistics.

Outline of the Remainder of the Study

The remainder of this study includes a review of the important literature in chapter 2, addressing adult learners, effective staff development, developmental phases of first-year teachers, teacher induction programs, and Indiana programs for teacher induction. Chapter 3 outlines details of the qualitative methodology that was used. Chapter 4 of the dissertation describes the school community, district, and school settings, as well as the established induction plan and descriptions of the first year teacher participants.

The next four chapters elaborate upon the major categories and themes derived from the participant interviews. Chapter 5 describes the data category entitled "Development of Self." Chapter 6 details the two categories entitled "Interpersonal Relationships" and "Pre-Service Preparation." Chapter 7 delineates the category "Actions and Tasks Associated With Teaching." Chapter 8 outlines the data category entitled "Induction into the Teaching Profession," and also provides a description of an "ideal" teacher induction program or plan.

Finally, chapter 9 includes conclusions, recommendations, implications of the study, and ideas for future research. Appendices to the dissertation include the interview protocol, a sample of the informed consent document, sample copies of correspondence

with interview participants and professional educators, and poems written by the participants.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Every truth has four corners: as a teacher, I give you one corner, and it is for you to find the other three.

—Confucius

Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with an overview of the research literature pertaining to first-year teacher induction programs. Topics reviewed in this chapter include characteristics of adult learners, learner-centered principles of education, characteristics of effective staff development programs, effects of school culture on first-year teacher success, issues related to teacher education, and phases of new teacher development. A detailed examination of teacher induction programs covers the historical aspects of induction, rationale and goals for induction programs, common program components, mentoring, and a brief description of the teacher induction program currently in place for the state of Indiana.

Characteristics of Adult Learners

Knowledge of the characteristics of adult learners serves as a foundation to program planning for first-year teachers. This knowledge base helps to determine the most effective means for inducting first-year teachers into both the teaching profession,

and the school sites where they will pursue their craft. Clark and Florio-Ruane (2001) assert:

> Teachers are not children; traditional school tasks are inadequate models for the uncertain, complex, intellectual-practical-moral-emotional life space of adult professionals; traditional measures of learning (objective tests, grades, credit hours) likewise miss the mark in reflecting what and how much teachers have learned. (p. 9)

Malcolm Knowles, long known as a key innovator for adult learning, or andragogy, described six characteristics of adult learners. In his work entitled, *The Adult Learner—A Neglected Species* (1984), he distinguished between the learning needs of children and adults.

1. Adults have a deep need to know why they need to know something.
2. Adults are task-oriented in their learning.
3. Adults bring to the learning situation a wide range of background experiences.
4. Adults have a deep psychological need to be self-directed learners.
5. Adults learn best when the learning directly applies to their life situation.
6. Adults are motivated by internal pressures, such as self-esteem or quality of life.

The Indiana Professional Standards Board (2002b) also identified characteristics of adult learners, which underlie its recommendations for planners of programs for adult learners. Adults come to the learning context with a wide variety of individual and background experiences. In view of this past learning, adults accept new ideas more cautiously, and bring with them cynicism and presuppositions.

"What differentiates adult learners from younger learners is the life experiences they bring to the learning situation" (Merrill, 2001, p. 6). Adults need to know the "why" of learning, relying upon their past experiences as a scaffold to support newly learned ideas, and using new learning to cope with unfamiliar experiences. Highly motivated and reflective learners, adults display enthusiasm for learning and a commitment to seeking direction and attaining goals (Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Jones, 1999; Marienau, 1999; Wynn, 2002).

> Studies of adult learning reveal that motivation is primarily intrinsic. Adults are motivated to learn what interests them and what they need to know. They choose learning opportunities when they perceive a deficit in their performance or an inadequacy in coping with immediate problems. Adults prefer learning that is self-directed and performance-based. (Brock & Grady, 2001, p. 108)

Knowledge of research on adult learners assists planners of induction programs, as they decide upon the types of activities and learning experiences to include. Adults learn best when they can build on past experiences, share ideas with colleagues, and apply new learning to practical situations (Indiana Department of Education, 2002; Knowles, 1950; Krueger, 2001). Successful adult learning programs provide a safe and comfortable learning environment, vary teaching techniques, keep the session moving in order to maintain interest, allow participant input, and include many opportunities for interaction, such as small group sessions, discussion, and problem-based learning activities (Backes, 1997; Indiana Department of Education, 2002; Knowles, 1950; Krueger, 2001; Merrill, 2001). Researchers also underscored the need for reflective practice as a characteristic of adult learning activities.

> A hallmark of an educated person is the capacity to reflect on and learn from experience such that the learning yields meaningful interpretations of life occurrences and informs future action. . . . The ability to reflect on and learn from practice becomes paramount. (Marienau, 1999, p. 135)

Learner-Centered Psychological Principles of Education

The American Psychological Association (1997) identified 14 learner-centered psychological principles pertaining to learners and the learning process. These principles addressed not only internal characteristics of learners, but also factors of the external environment or the context of learning, which interact with the internal factors. These factors, divided into four categories, were described as follows:

Cognitive and Metacognitive Factors

1. **Nature of the learning process.** Successful learners construct meaning from information and experience. They assume responsibility for their own learning and actively participate in the learning process.

2. **Goals of the learning process.** Setting and pursuing goals that are personally meaningful provides an important foundation upon which learning is based. These goals represent both personal and educational aspirations and interests of the learner.

3. **Construction of knowledge**. The ability to relate new information to existing knowledge promotes interest in continuing the learning process. By integrating this information with prior knowledge and understanding, learners connect and transfer new knowledge to new situations in a meaningful way.

4. **Strategic thinking**. Successful learners create and use a variety of thinking and reasoning strategies. These strategies assist learners in problem-solving and decision-making situations.

5. **Thinking about thinking.** Both critical and creative thinking skills play a

role in the learning process. Using higher order thinking skills helps learners to reassess their personal goals, monitor their own progress, and engage in reflective thinking processes.

6. **Context of learning.** The setting or context in which learning occurs can enhance or detract from learning. These environmental factors include technology, culture, group influences, and instructional practices used by the teacher.

Motivational and Affective Factors

7. **Motivational and emotional influences on learning**. Learners' beliefs about themselves, as well as their internal motivation, play a significant role in learner success. Curiosity and mild anxiety can enhance learning, while self-doubt and worry interfere with learning and student performance.

8. **Intrinsic motivation to learn.** Creativity and curiosity of the learner contribute to the learner's continuing interest in the pursuit of knowledge and skills. Intrinsic motivation to learn is enhanced by connecting learning to real-world situations and personal interests, and allowing personal choice and control.

9. **Effects of motivation on effort.** The willingness to put forth effort in order to master a subject indicates motivation to learn. Extended learner effort and guided practice reinforce the learner's commitment to work toward achievement of personal and educational goals.

Developmental and Social Factors

10. Developmental influences on learning. Individuals learn best when educators or trainers take into account the intellectual, emotional, and social characteristics of the learner. Presenting developmentally appropriate material, in an interesting and enjoyable way, supports the efforts of the learner and encourages active participation in the learning process.

11. Social influences on learning. Interpersonal interactions also influence learning success. Opportunities to collaborate with other learners encourage the development of trusting and caring relationships within the group, and allow the student to experience enhanced personal well-being and a sense of belonging to the group.

Individual Differences

12. Individual differences in learning. Attention to individual learning styles promotes a continuing desire to learn and an interest in the learning activities. Educators can help students improve upon and utilize their own learning modalities, and to tap into new learning activities as well.

13. Learning and diversity. Any group of individuals includes diversity in the form of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and social backgrounds. Careful attention to these differences promotes optimal opportunity for learning to occur, allowing individuals to feel respected and valued.

14. Standards and assessment. On-going assessment of individual achievement and progress provides important feedback to learners. Educators can then utilize the information gained from assessments to adjust teaching techniques as needed, in order to appropriately challenge students and facilitate continued leaning.

Knowledge of and attention to these principles when planning learning activities supports and encourages adult learners, as they acquire new knowledge and skills. Specific learner-centered strategies include peer tutoring and coaching, cooperative learning activities, technology-based strategies, interdisciplinary projects, performance-based assessment, and opportunities for choice and self-monitoring (Bonk, 2004).

Characteristics of Effective Staff Development Programs

Knowledge of effective staff development practices provides a strong foundation for planning first-year teacher assistance programs. According to the Indiana State Board of Education's *Strategic and Continuous School Improvement and Achievement Plan* (2002), "The goal of professional development is to change teacher knowledge, skills, or attitudes, leading to improved student achievement" (p. 2). Core professional development principles state that effective professional development draws upon best practice, integrating priorities for educational improvement into any plans for staff development programs (Bull & Buechler, 1996; Hirsch & Sparks, 1999; Indiana State Board of Education, 2002).

Effective professional development actively involves participants in job-embedded learning activities, honoring the individuality of the adult learner (Peery, 2002). According to Bull and Buechler (1996), "Traditionally, professional development for teachers has consisted of one-shot training workshops delivered by outside consultants with no follow-up" (p. vii). Exemplary professional development is school-based and individualized, avoiding this traditional format. Coaching and follow-up activities to collaborative learning experiences allow timely application of newly learned skills, continuing professional growth, encouragement of innovation and risk-taking, and

collaborative consulting among colleagues (Bull & Buechler, 1996; Hirsch & Sparks, 1999; Indiana State Board of Education, 2002; Wasley, 1999).

Joyce and Showers Training Model

Joyce and Showers (2003) proposed a training model based on four basic conditions, which must be present if staff development is to significantly and positively affect student learning. They described these four conditions as follows.

1. The development of a collaborative community of educators serves as the foundation for effective staff development. This community should meet together frequently, in small study or research groups, to investigate instructional models and methods. Individuals practice the models and methods, and then meet again to share successes and concerns.

2. Staff development should focus on curricular and instructional strategies. Strategies for study and possible implementation should be selected on the basis of their high probability of improving student learning.

3. The degree of positive change in student achievement, occurring as a result of this staff development, should be both detectable and verifiable. Both the social and the academic climates of the school need to change, in order for this improved learning to occur.

4. The type of staff development provided should support educators in developing the skills they need to ensure that improved student learning takes place.

The four distinct steps for implementation of this training model consist of discussion of a theory or teaching model, demonstrations of the innovation, practice and feedback, and peer coaching. A learning community embracing this model utilized study

groups as the basis for this process (Joyce, Murphy, Showers, & Murphy, 1989; Joyce & Showers, 2003).

Teacher study groups represent a method of staff development, studied extensively by Henriquez-Roark (1995), Joyce and Showers (2003), Murphy (1992), and Rogers and Babinski (2002). Adult learning principles, learner-centered principles, and effective staff development techniques supported the formation of these teacher study groups. The groups provided opportunities for teachers to interact with other professional educators on a collaborative basis, in order to study teaching techniques and their effect on student learning. After studying specific techniques and models, which were research-based and proven to significantly impact student learning, teachers then implemented the models in their classrooms, observing and coaching one another. Upon returning to the group, the teachers shared their results, discussing and processing their ideas in a reflective fashion.

The study group model honored the knowledge and skills of both veteran and first-year teachers. For experienced teachers, this model encouraged fine-tuning of teaching models and strategies in a supportive climate. For first-year teachers, study groups promoted the acquisition of a repertoire of teaching techniques, while encouraging the development of a trusting and collaborative relationship with other teachers in the building.

Joyce and Showers (2003) also provided a historical look at peer coaching as an effective means of in-service training for teaching professionals, tracing peer coaching from its inception in the 1980s through its current applications. They pointed out the importance of facilitating the full scope of application of peer coaching concepts, and the

effects of peer coaching on the relationships between teachers. "Teachers learn from each other in the process of planning instruction, developing materials to support it, watching each other work with students, and thinking together about the effect of their behavior on student learning" (p. 94).

A "Buffet" of Training Opportunities

Strategies for effective and exemplary professional development take into account the characteristics of adult learners, as well as the learner-centered principles, described above. Effective strategies include integration of content, theory, and pedagogy. "To tailor professional development to individual teachers' needs, principals must also provide a 'buffet' of training opportunities" (Peery, 2002, p. 22). Bonk (2004), Joyce and Showers (2003), and Wong (2002) listed peer dialogue, technology applications, reflective practice, study groups, classroom observation, action research, curriculum development, committee work, analyzing student work, coaching, mentoring, and writing as just a few opportunities available for little or no cost to adult professionals. Conferences, workshops, and university coursework appeared on the list also; however, these opportunities were often less accessible and more costly than the other staff development plans listed above (Indiana Department of Education, 2001, 2002). Bull and Buechler (1996) pointed out that "effective professional development is embedded in the daily lives of teachers, providing for continuous growth. Effective professional development focuses on improved student learning and is evaluated on that basis" (p. 4).

Issues Related to Pre-Service Teacher Education

Hallinan and Khmelkov (2001) stated that traditional undergraduate university programs for teacher preparation might, in some instances, prepare teachers less than adequately for entry into the classroom setting.

> Trainees are exposed to weak courses focusing on pedagogy and student discipline, rather than on subject matter and educational research. Little attention is given to preparing teachers to educate a diverse student body. Demographic, political, economic and technological changes are occurring in society at an unprecedented rate. The social forces affect the institutions that train teachers, the schools where teachers work, and the context in which they teach. (p. 177)

Darling-Hammond (2003) indicated that teachers lacking in adequate initial preparation to enter the classroom were more likely to leave the profession than those experiencing more intensive training. She cited a report by the National Center for Education Statistics, which stated that 29% of new teachers who had no student teaching experience left within the first 5 years, compared to 15% of those who participated in student teaching. Darling-Hammond also reported that new teachers who entered the classroom with (a) previous training in selection and use of instructional materials, child psychology, and learning theory; (b) student teaching experience; and, (c) feedback on their teaching skills, left the profession at a rate one-half as great as those who did not have these experiences. She suggested that those teachers who graduated from teacher education programs felt they were more effective as teachers, and planned to stay in the profession longer, than those with no preparation as teachers, or those who followed alternative routes to enter the profession.

Darling-Hammond (1999) also proposed that states interested in improving the quality of education should pay attention to the quality of teacher preparation programs. She emphasized,

> It stands to reason that student learning should be enhanced by the efforts of teachers who are more knowledgeable in their field and are skillful at teaching it to others. Substantial evidence from prior reform indicated that changes in course taking, curriculum content, testing, or textbooks make little difference if teachers do not know how to use these tools well and how to diagnose their students' learning needs. This research indicates that the effects of well-prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than the influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and minority status. (p. 39)

Characteristics of Effective Teacher Preparation Programs

Hallinan and Kmelkhov (2001) described a 1996 study, in which the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future identified organizational characteristics that differentiated cutting-edge teacher preparation programs from traditional teacher preparation programs. These characteristics included extended pre-service clinical experience, standards for teacher practice and performance, a shared vision for instructional excellence, and shared beliefs between university and school faculty. Case studies, research, portfolios, and performance assessments ensured application of theory to the actual school setting (Hallinan & Khmelkov, 2001). In addition, immersion in urban settings helped to raise teacher awareness of the social problems affecting student attitudes and classroom performance (Batteson & Sixsmith, 1995).

In a report released in 2004 by the Southern Regional Education Board, recommendations for keeping first-year teachers in the classroom highlighted the importance of high quality teacher education programs. This report proposed that teacher education institutions provided exposure to real-life teaching situations, prepared

graduates to teach children with diverse needs in diverse settings, and formed partnerships with colleges and universities to ensure high quality experiences for student teachers (Bolich, 2004).

A 2003 study of new teachers by the Public Education Network, and funded by the MetLife Foundation, reached similar conclusions. However, this report emphasized the need to provide new teachers with extensive training in teaching students with special learning needs, students identified as English language learners, and students achieving below grade level. Further recommendations for teacher preparation included integration, throughout both coursework and field experiences, of the development of skills needed to teach these students, as well as opportunities for pre-service experiences in urban schools. Finally, the study suggested that teacher preparation programs focus on heterogeneous instruction, designed to meet the needs of a wide range of student skills in the same classroom (Miles, Imbimbo, & Lau, 2003).

Danielson (1999) also asserted the importance of a clinical component in teacher preparation: "There is . . . no such thing as professional preparation independent of practice. This professional knowledge cannot be acquired during university course work, regardless of the quality of that coursework" (p. 251).

Hallinan and Khmelkov (2001) and Cobb (1999) found that some other nations employ more intensive training for pre-service teachers, provide competitive salaries, and offer more time for collaboration and training.

> In Japan and China, for example, joint curriculum planning and class preparation, teacher observation by teacher peers, and joint research on teaching are commonplace. A number of Asian and European countries have a state or national curriculum which defines a limited number of concepts and topics to be covered, and thus frees teachers to concentrate on pedagogy. (Hallinan & Khmelkov, 2001, p. 179)

Professional Development Schools

Newbert and Binko (1998) and Wasley (1999) suggested a partnership between university and school in the form of professional development schools (PDS) as a possible bridge over the gap between pre-service teacher education and classroom practice. "Findings from this study and others offer strong evidence that school-university collaborative mentoring programs are necessary to assist entry-year teachers' transition into the school setting" (Stroot, Folkes, Langholz, and others, 1999, p. 39). Variously referred to as "professional development schools" by the Holmes Group, "clinical schools" by the Carnegie Corporation, and "professional practice schools" by Levine, these programs may be key components to improving student learning through improving instruction (Abdal-Haqq, 1989).

Restructuring the P-12 school setting underlies the development of PDS. This process may involve changes in organizational structures, reallocation of resources, improvements in instructional techniques, revamping of teacher work, and rethinking of the relationships between universities and P-12 learning institutions (Abdal-Haqq, 1991). Major purposes of these schools include: (a) to improve teacher education for both pre-service and practicing teachers; (b) to strengthen knowledge and practice in teaching; and (c) to serve as models of productive relationships between teachers and administrators.

Abdal-Haqq (1991) described these schools as outstanding public schools, jointly established and maintained through a cooperative effort of schools of teacher education and school districts. These schools were collaboratively staffed by outstanding members of the public school faculty and by university faculty. Sometimes these schools were

compared to major teaching hospitals, in which skilled physicians served as clinical models and instructors for those entering the profession (Darling-Hammond, 1997a; Levine, as cited in Abdal-Haqq, 1989).

Collaboration between universities and school districts would support cooperative research on school-related problems, shared teaching, and cooperative supervision of first-year teachers (Holmes Group, as cited in Abdal-Haqq, 1989). These schools would also serve as sites for research and experimentation in teaching practices, and strengthen decision-making capabilities among school personnel.

In 2001, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) released new standards for professional development schools (PDS). NCATE identified four goals, to be achieved through the implementation of PDS: (a) provide training experiences for both pre-service and first-year teachers, in an actual school setting; (b) enhance student achievement; (c) afford professional development for teachers; and (d) encourage research on teaching and learning. Of the 525 teacher preparation institutions accredited by NCATE, 166 of them maintained PDS partnerships, as indicated by a self-report survey (NCATE, 2001).

Further, according to the NCATE website, PDS partners worked together to achieve a shared vision to develop and implement a teacher education curriculum, with student needs at the core. University faculty and P-12 classroom teachers participated together in study groups and seminars, through a co-teaching relationship with a strong mentoring component. In addition, on-site action research in the P-12 setting assisted in determining "what works" in enhancing student achievement (Abdal-Haqq, 1991; NCATE, 2001).

On-site seminars and coursework, combined with classroom visits, tutoring, service projects, and reflective discussion, may be more effective than student teaching alone, in preparing pre-service teachers to enter the classroom. In addition, the presence of additional educators in the classroom setting could only result in a positive impact on classroom instruction, while acclimating pre-service teachers to the daily realities of life in the school context. Distance learning, as well as "on-line" and "academy" formats, holds promise for changes in teacher education programs (Savoye, 2001).

However, some critics cautioned that proponents of these professional development schools maintained unrealistic expectations for the extent of school reform and restructuring that would actually be possible as a result of these partnerships (Abdal-Haqq, 1989). Chadbourne (1995) argued that school-based programs, such as professional development schools, rather than campus-based ones, had not been widely embraced in the past. Reasons given for this included the additional time required to plan and implement these programs, and the reluctance of some university students to participate in them, due to uneasiness with the unknown context, requirements of additional work, and distance from the "campus life" setting. In addition, the combination of preparing new teachers, supporting veteran teachers, participating in research, and engaging in school improvement efforts, all at the same time, may be asking too much of the professional development school programs (Olson, as cited in Abdal-Haqq, 1989).

Phases of First-Year Teacher Development

Veenman (1984) postulated five phases of first-year teacher development. Knowledge of these phases appeared to play a key role in assisting new teachers to the

successful completion of their first school year, whether they were first-year teachers in the profession, or experienced teachers in transition. These phases ranged from the anticipation and survival phases of the first few weeks of school, through disillusionment and fatigue, finally culminating in rejuvenation and reflection at the end of the first year.

Moir (1990) and Tetzlaff and Wagstaff (1999) also reported that first-year teachers typically advanced through this series of phases during their first year in the profession. *Anticipation* preceded the advent of the school year. Teachers experienced excitement and apprehension in anticipation of the arrival of students and the first day of school. "They tend to romanticize the role of the teacher and the position" (Moir, 1990, p. 1).

The first month on the job found the first-year teacher in a phase aptly labeled *survival*, as he or she adjusted to the long hours and rapid pace involved in developing lessons and preparing for the surprises of each new day. "Beginning teachers are instantly bombarded with a variety of problems and situations they had not anticipated. Despite teacher preparation programs, new teachers are caught off guard by the realities of teaching" (Moir, 1990, p. 1). Teachers in this phase still demonstrated commitment and energy.

The next 6 to 8 weeks in the classroom led to *disillusionment,* as first-year teachers struggled with fatigue, low morale, and possible illness. New events, such as back-to-school-night, student assessments, and parent-teacher conferences took their toll on the physical, emotional, and intellectual capabilities of the teachers. "The extensive time commitment, the realization that things are probably not going as smoothly as they

want, and low morale contribute to this period of disenchantment. New teachers begin questioning both their commitment and their competence" (Moir, 1990, p. 2).

However, winter holiday vacation offered an opportunity for rest and renewal, leading to the *rejuvenation* phase in January. First-year teachers typically experienced a slow rise in attitude at this time, as they focused on planning, teaching strategies, and curriculum, and developed a better understanding of the school culture and systems. The month of May brought with it *reflection,* an invigorating time involving relief at the near-completion of the first school year, anticipation of year-end activities, development of a vision for year 2 in the classroom, and preparation for changes in the year to come. The cycle of phases of first-year teacher development is illustrated in a visual format in Figure 1.

In *Burnout in Teachers: Shattered Dreams of Impeccable Professional Performance,* Friedman (2000) described a similar cycle of new teacher development; however, this model evolved from a negative perspective, lacking the stages of rejuvenation and reflection found in the previous model. He labeled the stages as "Stage A: The Slump," in which first-year teachers described their first few weeks in teaching, using words such as "shock, nightmare, and catastrophe" (p. 598). "Stage B: Fatigue and Exhaustion" involved teacher burnout, as a result of difficulties with students, overload, criticism, lack of recognition and reward, isolation, and blaming initial training. Friedman's "Stage C: Adjustment" encompassed new teachers' attempts to adapt and adjust to the challenges facing them (Friedman, 2000).

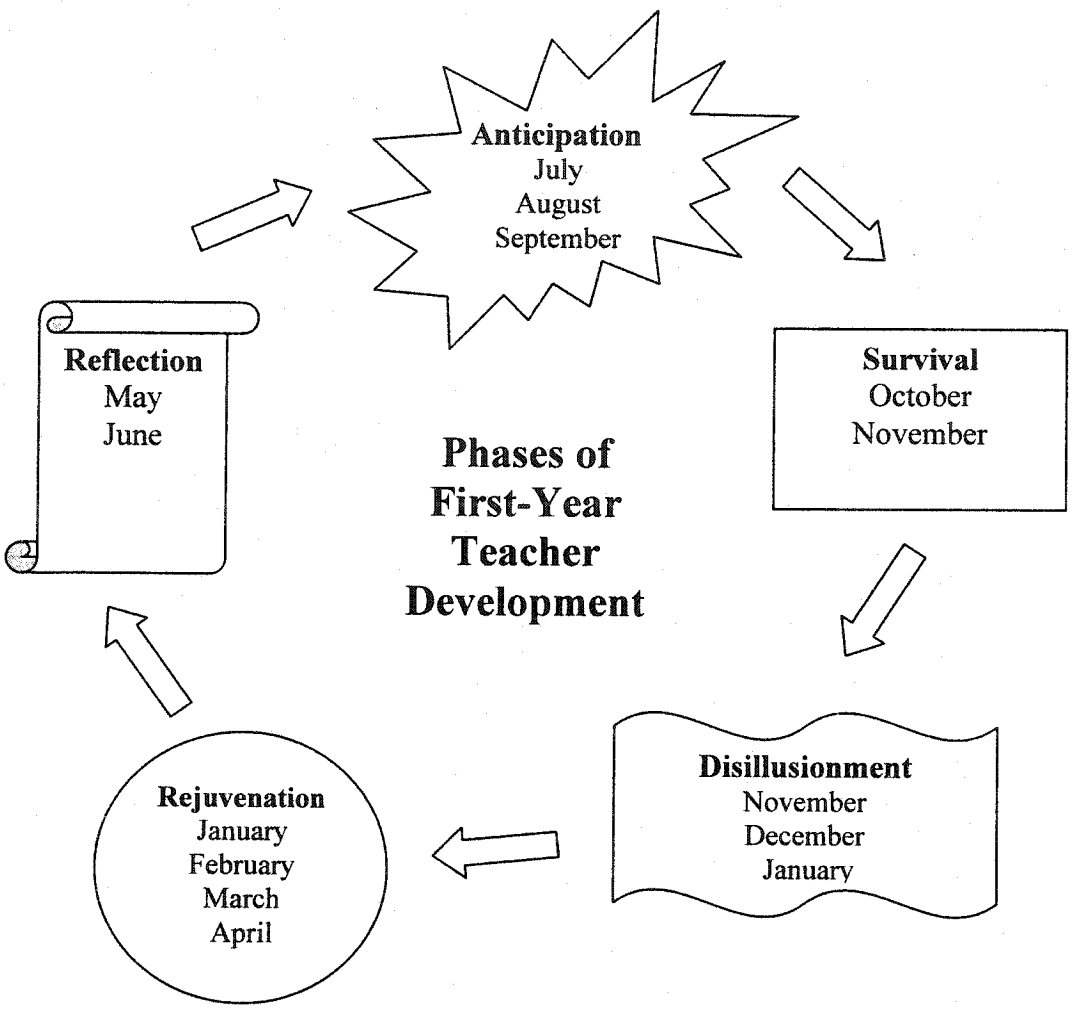

Figure 1. Phases of first-year teacher development.

Challenges Faced by New Teachers

Roehrig et al. (2002) conducted an extensive study of challenges identified by first-year teachers. These researchers based their work on the seminal research by Veenman (1984), combining an exhaustive historical study of the literature, with case studies of first-year teachers. Roehrig et al. (2002) identified 571 specific challenges, which they grouped into 22 categories. The categories could be classified into five sources of first-year teacher challenges: self, students, professional, other adults in school, and outside of school challenges. In their book, entitled *Stories of Beginning Teachers: First Year Challenges and Beyond* (2002), the researchers made a significant point, one which supported the need for first-year teacher assistance and induction into the profession: The challenges faced by first-year teachers are many, varied, and unceasing, day in and day out, week after week. First-year teachers must continually rise to meet these challenges, in order to successfully navigate their first days, weeks, and months in the classroom.

Preparing students to participate in state-mandated standardized assessments becomes another anxiety-provoking area, as described by Kaufman, Johnson, Kardos, Liu, and Peske in the article entitled, "Lost at Sea: New Teachers' Experiences With Curriculum and Assessment" (2002).

> Not only were these inexperienced teachers left on their own to choose content, devise strategies, and prepare materials, but they had to do so knowing that their failure to get it right from the start could compromise their school's MCAS ranking and lead to public embarrassment. The stakes are high and the supports are few. The pain of failing in the classroom is intensified by the prospect of public exposure, which may cause many new teachers—who might have succeeded with more support—to exit quickly for other lines of work. (p. 292)

Brock and Grady (2001) addressed challenges faced by another group of teachers labeled as "new" to the profession, although not as beginners. This group included veteran teachers assigned to a new school, and teachers returning to the profession after an absence. Although often seen as competent and mature, thus requiring no additional assistance, these individuals could also benefit from help provided by a mentor teacher, in order to learn about school policies and procedures, as well as adjusting to a new location and school culture.

Challenges Unique to Female Teachers

In her 2002 study, Cattani addressed a set of unique problems encountered by a particular group of first-year teachers: those who happen to be female. The National Center for Education Statistics (2000), cited by Cattani, states that 73% of public school teachers are women. Cattani asserted that these problems occurred as a result of the ways in which females are socialized, as well as the differences between the backgrounds of the teachers and their students. The women in her study were characterized as White, middle-class individuals, who described family backgrounds that included professional parents, a stimulating school experience, youth experiences in suburban neighborhoods, interests in the arts and travel, and optimism about the future (Cattani, 2002). These young women struggled with entering classrooms in urban school settings, which were unfamiliar to them. Tannen (as cited in Cattani, 2002) contended that women have been socialized to develop speech and behavior patterns that may conflict with the authoritarian manner required to successfully manage a classroom. She states:

> These more feminine characteristics may make negotiating a work environment difficult, because they are contrary to the more direct, unambiguous style of

> interaction that is often associated with men and the institutions they historically have shaped and controlled. One of those institutions is the school. (p. 6)

Young teachers who happen to be female may encounter issues related to voice tone, stature, and assertiveness of manner. Furthermore, according to Cattani's study, these young women sometimes seemed reluctant to inform students of incorrect or irrelevant answers, and to enforce strict deadlines or impose penalties for assignments turned in late. These individuals sometimes seemed averse to situations in which they were required to appear assertive, such as interactions with parents, classroom aides, colleagues, or administrators. They appeared to avoid conflicts, swallowing their unmet needs or unfulfilled requests in the process. Cattani (2002) further asserted that although these situations reflected characteristics of many first-year teachers of both genders, they presented unique problems for young, White, female first-year teachers.

First-Year Teacher Experiences With School Culture

School culture may also significantly impact a first-year teacher's success or lack of success during the critical first year in the classroom. Johnson et al. (2001) described their research, conducted as part of the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers for Harvard University Graduate School of Education. This 5-year, qualitative study of teacher recruitment, support, and retention relied on interviews with new teachers to provide data on first-year teacher experiences. Results of this study suggested that support and training at the school site played a significant role in retaining first-year teachers. Johnson and Kardos (2002) found that poor working conditions and lack of significant on-the-job training and support were major reasons why many new teachers left the profession within the first 5 years. Their study points out:

> We found that new teachers had few of the traditional supports that one might expect would be routine. They reported receiving little guidance about what to teach or how to teach it. Instead, most described struggling on their own each day to cobble together content and materials, often with no coherent, long-term plan for meeting specific learning objectives. Neither the structures nor the cultures of their schools seemed to be geared toward their needs as novice teachers. (p. 2)

Johnson and Kardos (2002) identified three different types of professional cultures found in schools: *veteran-oriented, novice-oriented,* and *integrated professional cultures*. These researchers described *veteran-oriented cultures* as those in which the modes and norms of professional practice were both decided by, and designed to serve, veteran teachers. These schools were not organized in ways that supported new teachers. First-year teachers in these schools usually remained on the margins, with little opportunity for integration into the professional life of the school.

An abundance of youth and inexperience, as well as idealism, characterized *novice-oriented cultures*. This type of culture flourished in charter schools, as well as urban schools experiencing high teacher turnover. Although high in idealism and enthusiasm, little professional guidance existed for first-year teachers in these schools.

Johnson and Kardos (2002) also described a third type of school culture, which they called *integrated professional culture*. Teamwork and collaborative effort, with little regard for either number of years in the teaching profession or level of experience, characterized these school cultures. First-year teachers found support, acceptance, and an ample supply of mentors in integrated professional cultures.

In addition, Johnson and Kardos found other factors that promoted successful first-year teacher experiences. These include effective and supportive principals, ongoing help from team leaders, and on-site, timely professional development.

Components of Effective Induction Programs for First-Year Teachers

Introduction

Because our society can no longer accept the "sink or swim" attitude toward new teachers, many states now include induction programs as part of state teacher education mandates. Induction programs first began to take shape in the 1980s. As of January 2003, 30 states in the U.S.A. required induction programs for new teachers, while 16 states required and also financed these induction programs. Nineteen states required 1 year of induction; 5 states required 2 years of induction, and 3 states required 3 years of induction (Edwards, 2003). Few states, with the exception of California, mandated extensive programs that incorporate a variety of effective components.

Rationale and Goals

First-year teachers have seldom arrived at the schoolhouse as finished products, ready and able to assume the roles and responsibilities of experienced professionals. Teacher induction programs provide the additional training and skills necessary for first-year teachers to achieve confidence and competence in the classroom. "Induction is the process of systematically training and supporting new teachers, beginning before the first day of school and continuing through the first two to three years of teaching" (Wong, 2001, p. 50). Commonly accepted goals for first-year teacher induction programs include improving teacher performance, transmitting the culture of the school system, increasing the likelihood of retaining first-year teachers in the profession, promoting the personal and professional well-being of first-year teachers, and satisfying mandated requirements for first-year teacher assistance programs (Brock & Grady, 2001; Gordon & Maxey, 2000).

Programs designed to assist first-year teachers should not be seen as cure-alls or assessments, nor do they involve mere assignment of a buddy teacher. "Although such buddy systems are better than no support at all, they should not be confused with a comprehensive first-year teacher assistance program involving an induction team or even with the ongoing assistance provided by a well-prepared mentor" (Gordon & Maxey, 2000, p. 11). Therefore, individuals involved in creating and implementing these programs must understand the purposes and the components of effective programs, as well as the needs and concerns of first-year teachers.

Program Components

A 2004 Public Education Network study (Miles et al., 2003), funded by the MetLife Foundation, utilized survey instruments and interviews with first-year teachers, in order to gather information on a wide variety of issues and concerns related to new teacher entry to the teaching profession. In the section of the report addressing induction programs, components of induction programs were discussed.

Effective induction programs, as stated in the report, are comprehensive, last several years, and meet the changing needs of teachers, as they gain confidence and experience in the classroom. In addition to help from an experienced mentor, first-year teachers need opportunities to interact with peers.

In addition, the study identified effective induction programs as those that are aligned with both state professional standards and with the instructional philosophy of the school and school district, and remained an integral part of the local plan for school improvement. Effective programs incorporated input from both first-year and experienced teachers, when deciding on program topics and methods of implementation.

Further, the study emphasized the importance of adequate time, resources, and administrative support for planning and implementing the program. The study also suggested that a strong mentoring component should remain an integral part of the program, with carefully selected and well-trained mentors. On-going assessment should be utilized to determine program effectiveness. Finally, all new teachers, whether prepared for the teaching profession through traditional or alternative routes, should be afforded the opportunity to participate in the program (Miles et al., 2003).

Breaux and Wong (2003) presented extensive documentation on the components of effective teacher induction programs. They defined "induction" as "the process of preparing, supporting, and retaining new teachers" (p. 4). This induction, according to Breaux and Wong, should include all the things that school districts do in order to inculcate the philosophy, vision, and mission, as well as the job responsibilities, into the hearts and minds of new teachers.

In the absence of programs designed to induct new teachers into the teaching profession and into their new district, the chances of losing this newly acquired talent increased dramatically. Additionally, Breaux and Wong cited loss of new teachers as a significant source of lost revenue for school districts. According to the Education Week 50 state report, *Quality Counts 2000* (cited in Breaux and Wong, 2003), teachers who had not participated in an induction program were twice as likely to leave a school district as those who had participated in an induction program.

Breaux and Wong (2003) described three necessary components of teacher induction programs: (a) orientation to the school district, its policies and procedures; (b) training that begins prior to the start of the school year, then continues throughout the

school year; and (c) mentoring provided by a trusted, knowledgeable, experienced, and caring individual. These researchers cited LaFourche Parish Schools in Louisiana; Flowing Wells School District in Arizona; Port Huron Area Schools in Michigan; and, Homewood-Flossmoor School District in Illinois as having exemplary new teacher induction programs.

Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) placed teacher induction programs into two groups. "Low-intensity" programs provided support and increased teacher retention. "High-intensity" programs targeted improved teaching practice in addition to retention. Low-intensity strategies included orientation, co-teaching, study groups, "buddy teachers," and adjusted working conditions.

> Beginning teachers . . . experience even low intensity efforts as highly valuable, when those strategies feature lots of contact with veteran teachers, contact that generally provides personal or emotional support, and that helps them address the unfamiliar tasks and problems they encounter as first-time teachers. (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000, p. 6)

High intensity support included demonstration lessons, full-time mentors, job sharing, interactive journals, mini courses, university partnerships, and summer "rookie camps." Videotaping first-year teachers' lessons for viewing and self-critique provided additional opportunities for development of teaching skills (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000).

These researchers also cited reflective practice groups, commonly found in Switzerland, and regional teacher centers of New Zealand, among the high intensity practices. Reflective practice groups functioned in a way that closely resembles the teacher study groups of Joyce and Showers (2003) and Rogers and Babinski (2002). These groups provided opportunities for teachers to meet in groups, study specific

educational issues, and share thoughts, ideas, and concerns. New Zealand's regional teacher centers offered intensive teacher workshops for first-year teachers; these teachers were released from classroom teaching duties in order to attend the workshops, which focused on instruction and curriculum.

In districts that provided little or no help for "rookies," new teachers turned to technology, with on-line help just a "click" away.

> New initiates to the profession are turning increasingly to the Internet. There they can find chat rooms, bulletin boards, and a massive compilation of techniques, activities, materials, and articles on teaching that are free and readily accessible. . . .The Internet operates as a user-friendly, nonjudgmental colleague. (Wong, 2001, p. 50)

Another relatively recent development for new teacher induction, the professional development school featured a university-school partnership, discussed in detail earlier in this document. Set in the school context, the professional development school paired practical experience with on-site university study, in the form of seminars and coursework (Batteson & Sixsmith, 1995; Newbert & Binko, 1998; Weiss & Weiss, 1999). Columbia University's innovative program combined on-site with on-line learning for new teachers, in a "new teacher academy" format (Delisio, 2002; Stroot et al., 1999).

Other program components provide additional opportunities for development of new skills, or honing of previously learned skills. These components often include:

1. participating in orientation before the start of the school year
2. meeting with the building principal
3. networking with other new teachers
4. videotaping lessons
5. co-teaching

6. observing other classroom teachers
7. working with study groups
8. reading professional material
9. attending seminars and skills conferences
10. developing a personal, professional portfolio (Bramblett, 1999; Breaux & Wong, 2003; Brock & Grady, 2001; Espeland, 1998; Ganser, 1999a; Ganser & Koskela, 1997; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Halford, 1998; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; Olebe, Jackson, & Danielson, 1999; Saretsky, 1994; Simmons, 2000; Wong, 2001, Zepeda, 1997). Although various combinations of these components appeared in the literature, mentoring proved to be the most common method of assisting first-year teachers in the transition from college student to classroom teacher. Mentoring also seemed to be the most common means of assistance for returning or transitioning veteran teachers as they re-entered the classroom; however, few formal programs seemed to exist which provide mentors for these teachers (Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Koppich, Asher, & Kerchner, 2002).

The *Pacific Rim* study (Moskowitz & Stephens,1997) of teacher induction presented a fascinating comparison of teacher induction programs in different countries.

> We found that promising teacher induction programs in case study sites in Australia, Japan, and New Zealand operate within a culture of shared responsibility, and an environment where all professionals take active roles in a new teacher's acculturation and transition. These sites also pursue a multi-pronged set of support strategies, including mentoring, modeling good teacher practice, orientations, and in-service training. The teacher induction programs in these sites focused on assisting new teachers, and not on assessing their competence. (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997, p. 1)

Researchers cited common challenges to the implementation of induction programs, which include obtaining funding, finding time during the school day for new teachers and mentors to meet, choosing appropriate mentors, training mentors, funding

programs, evaluating programs effectively, and developing an appropriate balance between evaluation and support (Bradley & Gordon, 1994; Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000).

Mentoring Programs for First-Year Teachers

The origin of the word "mentor" came from Homer's *The Odyssey*. Odysseus entrusted the education of his son, Telemachus, to his friend, Mentor, while he, Odysseus, was away in battle. Mentor served as an older and wiser friend who guided Telemachus (Lovett, 2002).

Mentoring, both formal and informal, appeared to be the most common means of first-year teacher assistance, despite state mandates for more extensive programs (Ganser, 1999b; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Hanby, 2000; Looney, 1996; Lucas, 1999; Nelson, 1995; Rapp, 1986; Williams, Prestage, & Bedward, 2001). "Mentoring is the cornerstone of many successful beginning teacher assistance programs" (Gordon & Maxey, 2000, p. 34).

However, Wong and others also cautioned that mentoring alone provides a less effective means of assisting new teachers than a combination of induction activities (Ganser, 1999b; Moir, 2000; Wong, 2001, 2004). "The presence of mentors does not in and of itself guarantee that teachers will become more skilled at teaching or more thoughtful about their work than they would be without the mentors" (Gratch, 1998, p. 221). An optimal situation seemed to be a combined program of mentoring with induction. "During the induction process, administrators and staff developers provide on-going training to new teachers. Mentors then assist the new teachers in implementing what has been learned" (Wong, 2001, p. 50).

Gordon and Maxey (2000) indicated that the coaching and mentoring aspect of first-year teacher assistance programs forms the basis for most programs. "Like athletes, teachers will put newly learned skills to use—if they are coached" (Joyce & Showers, 1982, p. 5). Mentors and peer coaches serve as on-site individuals who could be available at a moment's notice to assist first-year teachers by answering questions, becoming a sounding board, solving problems, maintaining perspective, and listening to concerns.

Informal mentoring often occurs through conversations in hallways and teacher lounges, between classes, and during planning time. These informal conversations help new teachers learn to deal with lesson plans, classroom management, and instructional issues. The mentor serves as a compassionate listener and guide for the new teacher.

> What happens on the spur of the moment in the hallways can provide new teachers with the immediate input they may need. These meetings of new and experienced teachers are crucial and must be honored, not ignored. As unstructured as they may seem, these hallway meetings are effective and productive. (Delgado, 1999, p. 27)

Technological means, such as e-mail communiqués and journals, chat rooms, and bulletin boards, further support communication between novices and their mentors (Boreen & Nidday, 2000; Stedman & Stroot, 1998; Wickstrom, 2003). Common topics that mentors address with their "mentees" include opening and closing the school year, addressing student discipline concerns, planning for instruction, obtaining resources, assessing student learning, communicating with parents, and coping with school culture (Brock & Grady, 2001; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Lovett, 2002; Portner, 2003).

Ganser (1999b) found that mentors used a variety of interesting metaphors to describe the mentoring relationship, comparing it to "gardening," "piloting an airplane,"

"sculpting," "providing emergency towing service," "directing a play," "serving as a scoutmaster," "coaching a team," and "parenting a child or spouse." "The figurative language used by teachers to describe their experiences as mentors is useful in elucidating the complexities of mentoring and the mentoring relationship" (Ganser, 1999b, p. 43). These metaphors afforded insight into the interpersonal and nurturing nature of the mentor-novice relationship.

Matching first-year teachers with the appropriate mentors provides a key to a successful, supportive relationship. Not all teachers fit the description of excellent mentors. According to Brock and Grady (2001), a variety of ways to select mentors exists, including nominations by principals, by other teachers, or self-nominations. They further suggested setting up a committee, charged with the responsibility of screening mentor applications, using a set of prerequisite criteria. These criteria can minimally include number of years of teaching experience, level of education, and type of certification. Other means of screening possible mentors might include a review of letters of nomination, interviews with mentors, examination of resumes or vitae, and written essays in which mentors are asked to state their beliefs about first-year teachers, induction, and mentoring (Brock & Grady, 2001). In addition, the ideal mentoring program should include extensive training for mentors prior to their being assigned to assist a first-year teacher.

When matching first-year teachers to mentors, the minimum requirement for an appropriate match includes teaching at the same or similar grade level as the mentee, and when possible in the same school building. However, Huffman and Leak (as cited in Brock & Grady, 2001) also found that first-year teachers would prefer more competent

mentors who did not teach the same grade level, rather than less competent mentors who did. Brock and Grady also indicated that the most desirable characteristics for matching new teachers with mentors are personality and educational philosophy. These bits of information could be gleaned from applications and interviews for both the mentor and the first-year teacher mentee.

The most successful coaching situations involved mentors or coaches who possessed these characteristics: commitment to devote personal time and attention to the beginner, consistency, ability to build trust, helpful, caring, patient, able to laugh at themselves, reflective, accepting of many viewpoints, able to listen, self-confident, approachable, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable of the teaching profession (Brock & Grady, 2001; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Harris, 1995; Henke, Geis, & Gianbattista, 1996; Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2000; Wickman & Sjodin, 1997). Harris (1995) suggested that the mentor should be older than the novice teacher, in close proximity, and appointed to a similar teaching assignment and grade level. Portner (2003) described in detail four mentoring skills: relating, assessing, coaching, and guiding.

Stedman and Stroot (1998) described the PAR (Peer Assistance and Review) model, featuring mentors released from teaching duties for up to 3 years. These mentors assisted with orientation, visited classrooms of new teachers, conferenced with new teachers in person and by e-mail, offered individual advice, helped with non-teaching questions, and assisted with gathering data and research on new teacher concerns. An Oakland County, Michigan, program offered a second year of assistance to first-year teachers, with a focus on best practices in teaching, based on the work of Zemmelman, Daniels, and Hyde (Mills, Moore, & Keane, 2001).

The California model for mentoring new teachers included components that seemed to fit the criteria for well-designed and effective mentoring programs (Danielson, 1999; Moir, 2000). Designers of this program believed that models including only orientation or a "buddy system" provided inadequate support for first-year teachers. "The induction program is far more than a buddy system, in which the buddy is available as a sounding-board and a sympathetic ear and shoulder" (Danielson, 1999, p. 252). Researchers stated that activities must be well-designed, focusing on improvement of teaching practice. Based on this concept, the California model included the key components of self-assessment, reflection, and formative assessment, emphasizing the similarities between enhanced teacher performance and enhanced student learning (Danielson, 1999; Lucas, 1999).

Moir (2000) described the California program as consisting of three key components. These components included: (a) a full time advisor without teaching duties, who was free to meet weekly with new teachers; (b) training seminars, on topics such as literacy and English Language Learners; and, (c) release time for new teachers to observe, plan, and reflect.

This model involved the fundamental factor of three different formats for assignment of a "support provider" to each new teacher: full-time release of the mentor from classroom duties; the classroom teacher model, which includes no release time for the mentor; and a combination approach, which allows part-time release from teaching duties for the mentor (Meckel & Rolland, 2000). These support providers utilized a typical clinical supervision model: pre-conference with the new teacher, observe him or

her in the classroom setting, post-conference with the new teacher, select areas for inquiry, and formulate an action plan (Lucas, 1999).

For mentoring to be successful, mentors must be trained, and must receive on-going support from school administrators, and through mentor networking opportunities during the school year (Brock & Grady, 2001; Ganser, 1999b). Training should emphasize knowledge of characteristics of adult learners, observation techniques, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, and the phases of teacher development. Before assuming their coaching roles, mentors must develop skills in conferencing and observation, engage in reflective practice, participate in action research, and develop interpersonal skills (Ganser, 1999b; Huling & Resta, 2001).

> Mentoring may have a conservative effect on new teachers' practice, introducing and helping to support the status quo instead of encouraging new teachers to explore innovative practice. However, if mentors can be taught to work with their protégés in more learning-centered ways, perhaps the changes in mentors would result in changes in the teaching of their protégés. (Evertson & Smithey, 2000, p. 294)

Properly prepared and practicing mentors can be sparkplugs for school reform, as they constantly seek innovative practices to share with novice teachers. Breaux and Wong (2003) suggested the use of mentors' classrooms as demonstration classrooms, used in training sessions for new teachers before the new school year begins. Mentors can also serve as team leaders and study group facilitators, relying on their problem-solving and interpersonal skills to help these study groups function as viable forms of staff development (Joyce & Showers, 2003; Murphy, 1992; Rogers & Babinski, 2002).

Mentors conversely benefit as a result of the mentoring relationship. Acting in the mentor role helps teachers grow professionally, provides an understanding of administrative roles, allows focus on one's own practice, strengthens one's commitment

to the profession, validates one's own expertise, and encourages the development of a trusting relationship with a colleague (Ganser, 1999b; Huling & Resta, 2001; Tetzlaff & Wagstaff, 1999; Wollman-Bonilla, 1997).

Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) saw mentoring relationships as key to creating a strong community of colleagues. "After decades of assuming that teachers teach alone and get better only through their own individual trial-and-error, there is increasing commitment to the idea that all teachers are more effective when they can learn from and be supported by a strong community of colleagues" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 52). This community can support new and veteran teachers emotionally, reducing anxiety and insecurity, and harnessing the energies of new teachers while honoring the expertise of veteran teachers.

> The challenge will be to bring together the cultures of youth and experience. This will involve harnessing the energies that new teachers bring to the system without marginalizing the perspectives and wisdom of teachers whose knowledge and experience have deep roots in the past. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 53)

Re-entry to Teaching

Other researchers underscored the importance of including new teachers returning from an absence, those changing districts, schools, or grade levels, or other teachers needing support and guidance (Ganser, 1999a; Koppich et al., 2002; Stroot et al., 1999; Tetzlaff & Wagstaff, 1999). "The majority of past research has focused on beginning teachers and, as this study shows, experienced teachers new to school districts also have significant needs" (Stroot et al., 1999, p. 39). Building a community of adult learners can serve as a basis for restructuring teacher education and reforming schools, while

addressing the needs of teachers at all stages of career development. Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) summarized this idea as follows:

> We have identified three strategic approaches for developing mentoring programs that can make a lasting difference. First, we can conceptualize and design mentoring programs so that they are explicitly seen as instruments of school restructuring. Second, mentoring must be explicitly connected to other reform components in transforming the teaching profession. Mentoring must address the needs of all teachers. . . . It must be linked to the redesign of initial teacher education and ongoing school improvement. . . . Induction and the continuous development of teachers and administrators must build on the efforts of initial teacher education. Third, all those involved . . . in teacher mentoring must realize they are looking at a vital window of opportunity to recreate the profession. (p. 54)

Teacher Induction Programs in Indiana

The state of Indiana represents one of 30 states in the United States that mandate an induction program for first-year teachers. Although the state requires a mentorship program, local flexibility exists for implementation of the program. According to the Indiana Professional Standards Board (2002a), 1 year of mentorship is required for each first-year teacher. The state recommends that mentors be matched with novices by grade level, and mentors receive compensation for their role. However, no minimum number of meetings between mentor and novice is required, nor does the mentor evaluate the novice.

In addition to assignment of a supportive, non-evaluative mentor, Indiana first-year teachers attend an orientation conference with their building principal, and receive scheduled, documented observations, with feedback by the principal and the mentor. At the end of the induction year, the principal completes the first-year teacher assessment inventory, determining whether a second internship year is needed (Indiana Professional Standards Board, 2002a).

For the local plan of first-year teacher induction, the superintendent, principal, and mentor share the responsibility for inducting the new teacher. The teacher evaluation process of the school district, including pre- and post-observation conferences, along with the Indiana first-year teacher assessment inventory, form the basis for assessing the competence and performance of the new teacher. The local district also assumes responsibility for orienting first-year teachers and for mentor selection and training (Indiana Professional Standards Board, 2002a).

Indiana mentors must be licensed teachers, who volunteer to serve as mentors and cannot be arbitrarily assigned. Additionally, mentors must possess outstanding teaching skills, as judged by other professional educators such as administrators or teaching colleagues, and have completed a minimum of 5 years of teaching experience. In addition, the ideal mentor teaches in the same building as the novice, at a similar grade level and/or subject area (Indiana Professional Standards Board, 2002a).

The desired roles of a mentor include serving as a coach, a professional listener and resource, an "adult" educator, and an observer. In addition, a first-year teacher may request a university advisor, which often occurs if no mentor teacher in their subject area can be found, if the new teacher needs additional assistance, or if the new teacher serves in a limited license area (Indiana Professional Standards Board, 2002a).

First-year teachers serving with a limited license remain ineligible for participation in the first-year teacher assistance program. In addition, an Indiana teacher with more than 2 years of out-of-state teaching experience does not require a mentor. The state of Indiana does not require an internship for speech pathologists, guidance counselors, and vocational education specialists. The state of Indiana does not provide

assistance for teachers new to the district, school, subject, or grade level (Indiana Professional Standards Board, 2002a).

Starting with the 2003-04 school year, the renamed Beginning Teacher Assessment Program was re-organized around the IPSB standards, based on portfolio assessment for first-year teachers. New teachers receive an initial 2-year Practitioner's License. Upon completion of a portfolio, which includes videotaped lessons, lesson plans, and student work samples among other items, the initial license will be replaced with a 5-year Proficient Practitioner License. Trained scorers will review and score the portfolios. Mentors continue to assist first-year teachers; however, the revised program calls for extensive mentor training, prior to assuming the mentorship role (Indiana Professional Standards Board, 2002b).

A typical calendar for teacher induction, suggested by the Indiana Professional Standards Board, recommended orientation and training seminars in August and September; observation time in October, November, January, February, and April; pre- and post-conference with the principal in December; professional development in March; and assessment inventory in May. The details of these activities are left up to the individual districts (Indiana Professional Standards Board, 2002b).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to review the pertinent literature related to first-year teacher induction programs. Topics reviewed in this chapter included characteristics of adult learners, learner-centered principles of education, characteristics of effective staff development programs, issues in pre-service teacher education, effects of school culture on first-year teacher success, challenges faced by first-year teachers, unique problems

encountered by female first-year teachers, components of effective teacher induction programs, mentoring of new teachers, and teacher induction programs in the state of Indiana.

Knowledge and understanding of adult learners and staff development form a strong foundation for planning effective first-year teacher induction programs. Active adult learners seek out learning experiences in order to cope with life-changing events; a first-year teaching career most certainly qualifies as a life-changing event! Adult learners need to be able to tie new learning to past experiences, and to see the practical value and use of this learning. Creating learning experiences that involve participants in dialogue with others, set in comfortable small group contexts, seem to be optimal for increasing the link between new learning and previous life experiences.

Challenges faced by first-year teachers include dealing with isolation and fatigue, coping with a new school culture and new personalities, working with a diverse student population, and often involve adjusting to a new home and community. New teachers do not come to the job with a full complement of professional skills and an armload of instructional ideas with which to address these challenges. With the current loss of up to 50% of first-year teachers within the first 5 years of teaching, educators must find ways to support and assist these new teachers. Effective induction programs must be planned and implemented, so that first-year teachers survive their first year, and continue to persevere through disillusionment to anticipation of their second year in the classroom. Teacher education reform initiatives sought to provide a more seamless transition from the university setting to the classroom, through professional development schools and teacher academies.

Although mentoring relationships form the basis for most induction programs, mentoring is not enough. A "good buddy" system may provide emotional and social support, yet lacks a strong basis in developing instructional skills. Additional induction program components, such as collegial dialogue, networking, seminars, journaling, portfolio development, or study groups, supply additional assistance toward the development of a strong and skillful educator.

The state of Indiana has mandated and funded induction programs for first-year teachers, with mentoring as the keystone. However, assessment of first-year teachers still utilized the traditional clinical supervision model, with its focus on evaluation rather than assessment and improvement. Changes to this model began with the 2003-04 school year.

This extensive review of the research literature on first-year teacher induction programs revealed several gaps. The perceptions of first-year teachers themselves, expressed in their own words, rarely appeared in the literature. While the struggles and very different needs of experienced teachers "in transition" play a key role in teacher success, researchers seldom addressed this problem. Further study of teacher induction programs and of educator perceptions of these programs, as well as their implementation, will enlarge the knowledge base for teacher education reformers, for directors of new teacher induction programs, and for all educators involved in recruitment and retention of fresh, enthusiastic, and innovative teachers.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Most teachers have little control over school policy or curriculum or choice of texts or special placement of students, but most have a great deal of autonomy inside the classroom. To a degree shared by only a few other occupations, such as police work, public education rests precariously on the skill and virtue of the people at the bottom of the institutional pyramid.

—Tracy Kidder, *Among Schoolchildren*

Research Design

Qualitative research methods formed the basis for this study. Utilizing a study of a small number of cases allowed the type of in-depth study that best answered my research questions. Merriam (1998) found this type of research particularly useful in educational settings:

> Because of its strengths, case study is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study, such as education. Educational processes, problems, and programs can be examined to bring about understanding that in turn can affect and perhaps even improve practice. Case study has proven particularly useful for studying educational innovations, for evaluating programs, and for informing policy. (p. 41)

In addition, Creswell (1998) indicated that qualitative research requires researchers who are willing to "commit to extensive time in the field . . . engage in the complex, time-consuming process of data analysis . . . write long passages . . . and participate in a form of social and human science research that . . . is evolving and changing constantly" (pp. 16-17).

Qualitative methods take place in natural settings, involving active participation of both the researcher and the participants in data collection (Merriam, 1998). The semi-structured interview necessitates sensitivity to the participants, and seeks to build rapport with and establish credibility of the participant viewpoints. "Personal narrative is a powerful medium not only for conveying what teachers currently know and believe, but also for exploring new ideas and negotiating difficult experiences and challenging points of view" (Clark & Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 12).

Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, relying on emerging codes and nuances of meaning, rather than predetermined hypotheses. "The qualitative researcher uses complex reasoning that is multifaceted, iterative, and simultaneous" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182). Research questions and codes may undergo change throughout the research process. Data collection, analysis, and writing also occur simultaneously (Creswell, 2003).

The researcher becomes the primary means for data collection and analysis. Merriam (1998) described the researcher as the "research instrument"; she stated, "Data are mediated through this human instrument, the researcher, rather than through some inanimate inventory, questionnaire, or computer" (p. 7). Merriam expanded on this description, portraying the researcher as able to flexibly adjust to the situation at hand, sensitive to the context or setting in which data are gathered, and capable of clarification or summary during the research process as needed. Further, he or she reflects on his or her own personal experiences throughout the study. "This introspection and acknowledgement of biases, values, and interests (or reflexivity) typifies qualitative

research today. The personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182).

This qualitative study utilized an interpretive framework in order to construct a portrait of new teacher development and induction, positioned within the professional knowledge landscape. Creswell (1998) stated, "I prefer to select cases that show different perspectives on the problem, process, or event I want to portray, but I also may select ordinary cases, accessible cases, or unusual cases" (p. 62).

This work sought to discover patterns of meaning through interaction on a personal basis with new teachers, attempting to discover ways in which new teachers, through their beginning experiences, build knowledge of the context and culture of teaching. Clark (2001) provided an interesting, creative insight into narrative as a means of adult learning:

> Because of the connection between narrative and identity, stories offer enormous potential as a mode of personal change. Sometimes that change comes from identifying with a powerful story that makes sense of a person's experience in a new way. . . . Narrative, then, provides a very natural mode of learning, linked as it is to the meaning-making process. (cited in Merriam, 2001, p. 88)

Merriam (1998) underscored the importance of what research participants have to offer, in building an understanding of the participants' experience: "Since the respondent has been selected by the investigator on purpose, it can be assumed that the participant has something to contribute, has had an experience worth talking about, and has an opinion of interest to the researcher" (p. 84). Understanding the multiple perspectives of participants, and attempting to find commonly occurring themes and ideas, led to a clearer picture of the developmental needs of first-year teachers.

> The trend toward interpretive study, the quest for understanding, and the challenge to the imagination impel us to take our inquiry into the world. Through sharing the worlds of our subjects, we come to conjure an image of their constructions and of our own. (Charmaz, 2000, p. 529)

Merriam (1998) described the constant comparative model for data analysis in qualitative studies. She stated, "The development of categories, properties, and tentative hypotheses through the constant comparative method is a process whereby the data gradually evolve into a core of emerging theory" (p. 191).

A constant comparative model and evolving codes and themes throughout my study supported ongoing data analysis, assessment of results, and development of conclusions. Merriam further developed this idea of constant comparison of bits of data, asserting, "at the heart of this method is the continuous comparison of incidents, respondents' remarks, and so on, with each other. Units of data—bits of information—are literally sorted into groupings that have something in common" (Merriam, 1998, p. 179).

Description of the Pilot Study

A pilot study for this research, conducted in October and November 2002, provided an opportunity to test the interview questions for their usefulness for and appropriateness to continued study. Two new teacher participants contributed their insights through semi-structured interviews, which lasted less than 1 hour each. Tape recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and then analyzed for emergent codes. Each of the two participants received copies of the transcribed and coded interview documents for review and response. Conjointly, several colleagues and two university professors reviewed the pilot study methodology and results, providing feedback and suggestions.

Pilot Study Participants

This pilot study included a purposeful sample of two first-year teacher participants, both from a northern Indiana urban public elementary school. The school served a diverse body of between 300 and 500 students in Grades K-6, one of 25 elementary schools in an urban school corporation of over 21,000 students. The participants identified their school as composed of over 50% poverty-level students, from low to middle class families, as determined by their participation in federally funded free lunch programs. (Code names replaced actual participant names, in order to protect the privacy of the participants.)

Bryce described himself as a teacher of 25 fifth-graders. He came from an African-American heritage, and was between 30 and 39 years of age and single. Bryce graduated from a small public college. Although he indicated education as his primary area of certification, Bryce served in a previous career as a counselor in a mental health facility.

Lorraine, the second participant in the pilot study, characterized herself as a married, Caucasian female teacher, between the ages of 20-29. She taught 15 special-needs students in Grades 3 and 5, and attended a large public college. Lorraine listed education as her primary area of certification and work experience.

Both Bryce and Lorraine began teaching less than 1 year ago, serving in their current school and corporation less than 5 years. Approximately 20 teachers comprised their school faculty, with less than 5 first-year teachers at the school.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews served as the basic data collection method for this pilot study. Prior to beginning the interview, each participant signed an informed consent agreement. Each participant met with me for one interview, which lasted from 40 to 60 minutes. The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed, and placed in two volumes, one for each participant. The transcriptions were then returned to the participants for review and validation. I also kept field notes during and after each interview.

In addition, the examination of additional data sources contributed to placing the interviews within the school context and establishing internal veracity. These data sources included internal and external school public relations documents and print materials related to the first-year teacher induction program, in which both teachers participated.

Data analysis began with coding for emergent themes arising from the interviews, rather than utilizing pre-determined theme categories. One of my colleagues served as a "critical friend," in order to ensure the internal veracity of my conclusions. Names of participants have been changed so as to ensure confidentiality.

Discussion and Analysis of Pilot Study Data

In analyzing the data collected from this pilot study, I attempted to move from specific, individualistic interpretations and descriptions presented by the participants, to common themes and collective experience. Eight themes frequently arising from the interview transcriptions included: (a) evidence of colleague support; (b) perceived lack of support at the corporation level; (c) challenges; (d) effects of school culture on the induction process; (e) reflective practice to initiate improvement; (f) interpersonal issues;

(g) personal resilience when faced with difficulties; and (h) social issues encountered by first-year teachers.

Of these eight themes, evidence of colleague support (mentioned 15 times) and lack of corporation support (mentioned 10 times) emerged more frequently than the other themes derived from the interviews. Participants identified social issues encountered by first-year teachers the least number of times in the interviews (mentioned one time). Other frequently cited themes included challenges encountered by first-year teachers, effects of school culture on the induction process, and reflective practice to initiate improvement.

Evidence of Colleague Support

Expressions of colleague support flowed more strongly than any other themes from the participant discourse of this pilot study. Both Bryce and Lorraine expressed appreciation for support by colleagues, in both formal and informal mentoring relationships. This theme appeared more often than any other in the semi-structured interviews with the two participants. Bryce and Lorraine described ways in which colleagues assisted them, with such varied needs as grading papers, devising appropriate student assessments, solving classroom management problems, and communicating with parents. However, the most important ways in which colleagues assisted these two first-year teachers seemed to be in providing emotional and social support. Of his student teaching supervisor, Bryce stated,

> She had so much confidence in me that she just handed [her classroom] over to me one day, and she said, "Don't worry, I know you can do it, I'm going to be with you every step of the way," and she was. (Volume 1, p. 3)

As a first-year teacher, Bryce believed he could not have made it without the support and encouragement of other teachers.

> Without the staff, I probably would have fallen apart. I had a resource teacher in here with me, I also had a teacher next door. The support I received from them was outstanding. They were there right behind me, pushing and bringing out the best in me. (Volume 1, p. 4)

Lorraine found comfort and support from the formal assignment of a mentor during her first days as a classroom teacher: "I think just knowing it was somebody's job to help me out. More of a natural way to help . . ." (Volume 2, p. 4). Lorraine also spoke at length of the increased confidence she felt when talking with other teachers, whether they happened to be first-year teachers like herself, or veterans of the classroom.

> I would say I learned more from other teachers than from the presenters. I think it would have been beneficial to have trusted, experienced teachers, even younger teachers, second-year teachers, come in and speak to us. (Volume 2, p. 5).

Interestingly enough, the interview participants mentioned support by the building principal or by other administrators only once in these interviews.

Perceived Lack of Support at the Corporation Level

Both Bryce and Lorraine believed that, at the district level, new-teacher induction left much to be desired. The school corporation provided meetings and speakers, but Bryce and Lorraine felt these meetings served as "just one more thing" added to an already overcrowded school schedule.

> Those were helpful, but at times I felt they were a waste of time. The biggest complaint was after a long day of work, now here we have to come to this meeting for 2 hours, when we could have been planning for the next day. (Volume 1, p. 5)

In retrospect, both participants felt that training and orientation prior to the start of the school year would have been more beneficial than taking time out of their teaching and preparation to attend meetings during the school year. In addition, more time to talk with colleagues and share ideas would have been preferable, rather than revisiting topics already learned in college coursework.

Challenges

Teaching as a profession presents a challenge to veterans of "learning wars," and even more so to those just entering the profession. Challenges cited by both participants in this study aligned with those stated in the literature (Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Roehrig et al., 2002) as common to new teachers: attacking the overwhelming paperwork, grading assignments, disciplining students, encouraging reluctant learners, devising lesson plans, and arranging schedules.

Effects of School Culture on the Induction Process

Data gathered from the interviews included interesting comments about the culture of the school. These data agreed with the research undertaken by the Harvard Graduate School of Education regarding the effects of school culture on the success of new teachers (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). Collaborative cultures seemed to provide a greater degree of support for new teachers. Of the two participants in the pilot study, Bryce spent much of the interview time describing the helpful, supportive, and nurturing school culture, of which he felt fortunate to be a part. "Here, I was treated and welcomed with warm arms. . . I can always go to anyone in the building and talk to them about a problem and they would direct me or listen to me, advise me" (Volume 1, p. 12).

However, Bryce quickly pointed out that this culture of "warm arms" was not necessarily to be found in other schools. He seemed to feel almost guilty, as he listened to other first-year teachers, who recounted, during informal conversations, their struggles to survive in the "veteran teacher" individualistic cultures at other schools.

Each participant briefly mentioned the overwhelming aspect of committee work and other "little things" which served to extend the duties of the teacher beyond the regular hours of teaching. These duties, often taken for granted by veteran teachers, proved surprisingly tiring to the first-year teachers, who saw hours of grading papers, in addition to family obligations, stretching before them.

Reflective Practice to Initiate Improvement

I found both Bryce and Lorraine to be mature in their self-reflections and their desires to look inward to find ways to improve. Most adults find this no easy task to accomplish; yet rethinking one's approach is the only way to go about the task of re-designing and re-teaching a lesson, in order to capture the minds and imaginations of students. As Bryce stated, "You've got to rethink your approach, and go about it differently the next day."

Both Bryce and Lorraine mentioned spending hours reworking lessons, "spending every night trying to figure out ways of doing things" (Volume 1, p. 2). Taking time to reflect upon the ideas, programs, and goals discussed in faculty meetings and case conferences contributed to first-year teacher insights into these programs within the school context. Reflective practice also involved careful examination of beliefs and ideologies, in order to take a stand upon issues such as filing grievances and communicating with others.

Interpersonal Issues

"School politics" and relationships between people at the school occurred as a topic of at least passing interest in the interviews. This area seemed closely related to school culture and collaborative settings, although the most congenial of school faculties could turn nasty and argumentative upon occasion. Lorraine spoke of the need for diplomacy and care when dealing with other faculty and staff members. Her role in teaching special-needs students required that she interact with other teachers on a daily basis, as she delivered services to her students both inside and outside of the general education classroom. Devising a schedule to meet the needs of both students and other teachers proved to be an exacting task for Lorraine.

> You have to be very diplomatic with everybody. I have to learn to talk to everyone in the building. And so I've got to learn how to play many different roles throughout the day. You have to be very, very, sort of willing to compromise. (Volume 2, p. 2)

Bryce described the interpersonal issues he encountered on several levels, not only with colleagues, but also with students and parents. His somewhat acerbic comments regarding the "political" aspects of teaching follow: "They didn't mention about the politics that are involved with teaching, there are a lot of them. It makes you think this is all a political game" (Volume 1, p. 10).

Bryce continued by describing his uneasiness and his need for support when meeting the parents of his students. Bryce felt that he was not quite what they expected, as if gender served as a measure of a teacher's success in facilitating student learning: "[Some parents said] 'My child has never had a male teacher,' and they were basically concerned how I would be able to teach their kid" (Volume 1, p. 1).

Interpersonal issues, such as the capacity to communicate effectively, to interact in an appropriate fashion, and to relate well to others, often loomed large in the picture of school culture. These issues seemed to be inextricably combined with the ebb and flow of tensions and undercurrents throughout the school day and year.

Personal Resilience When Faced With Difficulties

Resilience can be defined as elasticity, the ability to withstand shock without permanent damage, or buoyancy. This ability to "bounce back" and continue in the face of difficulties emerged as one of the most striking features of my interviews with these first-year teachers. Both Bryce and Lorraine used words such as *confidence, committed, determined, prepared.* They agreed that in order to be successful as a new teacher, particularly in the urban setting, a person must be "very, very determined." Bryce stated, "I realized I was doing a good job, so I just kept going; now I can do more because I know where I am going with what I am doing" (Volume 1, p. 12).

Social Issues Encountered by First-Year Teachers

The school world cannot be disassociated from the outer world. Life in the school community represents a microcosm of society, presented on a much smaller scale. Thus, issues rampant in society cannot be separated from this smaller world of school society, often insinuating themselves into the picture in heartbreaking ways.

Bryce related how he learned about these small heartbreaks encountered by children as the outer world of society intruded into the inner world of school. "Small stuff," such as a school lunch, assumed a different face.

> I never thought about coming to work and seeing a hungry child. To reach some of these kids in this population we are dealing with, make sure you bring money

> every day. I did see it when [her] student aide didn't have lunch money and couldn't have lunch. (Volume 1, p. 9)

Conclusions of the Pilot Study

First-year teachers faced many challenges as they began their new careers, including interactions with parents and colleagues, as well as with their students. Transitioning from student to teacher involved more than just opening a book and planning lessons; although more subtle, the interpersonal and social issues which affect educators within the school setting assumed equal importance. Indoctrination into the profession seemed to hinge upon a collaborative school culture, colleague support, and presence of an encouraging mentor.

Successful teachers can be differentiated from those who drop out of the profession through an examination of the personal characteristics of these successful ones. Resilience and the willingness to enter into reflective practice seemed to characterize those who possess the spark to continue in this demanding yet rewarding profession.

Implications of the Pilot Study Results

This pilot study about a first-year teacher induction program in northern Indiana provided insights into the thought processes, needs, and challenges of new teachers. The study holds important implications for university instructors and student advisors, whose responsibilities include preparing pre-service teacher candidates for entrance into the field of education. In addition, administrators and trainers who plan first-year teacher assistance programs would benefit from these recommendations.

The inclusion of a mentor or team of mentors for each first-year teacher is essential to promoting a successful start to a new teacher's career in education. These mentors should work or teach in close proximity to the new teacher for whom they are responsible. When assigning a mentor, careful attention should be paid to the characteristics of the mentor, and to matching the new teacher to a mentor who will effectively provide support, nurturance, and assistance.

When planning first-year teacher orientation activities and on-going support groups, trainers, planners, and administrators should carefully examine their plans for first-year teacher induction programs, ensuring frequent opportunities for first-year teacher interactions with colleagues. Perhaps a small group setting, with time to share, rather than devoting most of the time to a speaker, would prove to be more beneficial to the professional development of new teachers. Seeking the input of new teachers in planning the activities would also provide valuable insights into meeting the professional development needs of these teachers.

Implications of the Pilot Study for Future Research

Prior to starting the research for this dissertation, changes in research methodology and procedures occurred, based upon the work with first-year teachers, initiated through this pilot study. These changes included revision of the list of interview questions, improvement of the informed consent document, and a decision to widen the catchment area of participants to include multiple sites.

Rationale for Purposeful Sample

Purposeful sampling techniques were used for this study, since the goal was to explore the first-year teacher experience in depth. Merriam (1998) developed the rationale for purposeful sampling, affirming, "Since generalization in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research, probabilistic sampling is not necessary or even justifiable in qualitative research. Thus, nonprobabilistic sampling is the method of choice for most qualitative research" (p. 61). Patton (as cited in Merriam, 1998) also posits:

> The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling. (p. 61)

Creswell (1998) pointed out the necessity for all participants in the purposeful sample to have experience of the phenomenon under study. "Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (p. 118).

Criteria for Purposeful Sample

Participants for this study were delimited to practicing K-6 classroom educators in an urban school district located in northern Indiana. The population for this study was further delimited to teachers completing their first year of experience in the teaching profession, following their graduation from college, so that the experiences of the first-year teacher could be readily brought to mind during the interview process. Only

professionally trained teachers who were teaching in a single-grade classroom participated.

Names of prospective participants were obtained through recommendation by school principals, by directors of first-year teacher induction programs, and by participants. Prospective participants were recognized as first-year teachers who demonstrated continuous progress in improving their instructional skills, and were likely to receive a rating of "pass or satisfactory" on the beginning teacher assessment inventory. Teachers at the school at which I served as building administrator were exempt from the study. Names of the individual participants and of their schools remained confidential throughout this study.

The population for this study included 17 first-year teacher participants, out of a total of 21 eligible for participation in the study during the 2002-2003 school year. Four teachers indicated a willingness to find out more about the study; however, they later declined to participate due to personal time constraints. Thus, the participants were further delimited to those first-year teachers who were both willing and capable of participating in the study.

Procedures for Data Collection

All 21 first-year teachers eligible for this study received letters of invitation to participate, followed by personal contact by phone. Of this initial group, 17 teachers chose to participate, and 4 declined. Semi-structured interviews served as the primary means of data collection for the interpretive approach to this study, allowing both myself and the readers of this study to enter into the unique perspective and context of the new teacher. The interviews consisted of approximately 10 basic questions, focusing in

particular upon the development process of first-year teachers, and their reflections on how the induction programs in which they participated contributed to their development. Interview questions were formulated as a result of a review of the literature on first-year teacher induction programs around the world (Moskowitz & Stephens, 1997). Additional questions evolved throughout the interviews, based on participant responses. These questions permitted each participant to further expand on his or her experiences as a first-year teacher, and differed from one participant to another. Demographic information was also obtained at the start of each interview, in order to report descriptive statistical information about the participant group.

The interviews were conducted at neutral sites, as determined by each participant. Interviews ranged from 60 to 120 minutes in length. Approximately 21 hours of interview tapes resulted from the interviews; these tapes were later transcribed verbatim, prior to beginning data analysis, resulting in 442 pages of transcribed material.

Other materials were obtained from the teacher participants themselves, and from building principals or program directors when appropriate. These materials included field notes, poems written by the teacher participants, and print material directly related to the first-year teacher induction program in place for Midwestern City School District.

Ethical Considerations

"Regardless of tradition of inquiry, a qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports" (Creswell, 1998, p. 132). Prior to beginning the interview, each participant signed an informed consent agreement. Each participant met with me for one interview, lasting from 60 to 120 minutes. The interviews were tape-recorded and

transcribed verbatim. The completed transcriptions were returned to each participant for review and validation. Names of participants, their schools, and the school corporation were changed for this final research report, in order to ensure confidentiality when reporting the study results.

Interview Questions

1. Talk to me a bit about your experiences as a first-year teacher.
2. Describe the three biggest challenges you face as a first-year teacher.
3. In which aspects of your teaching did you need the most support?
4. If you could plan the ideal first-year teacher induction program, how would it look? Describe the components, setting, and presentation methods of this program.
5. Describe the components of the first-year teacher induction program/support at your (a) school and (b) corporation.
6. What part(s) of the (a) school and (b) corporation program(s) proved most beneficial to you and why?
7. What areas of teaching seemed to you to be less than adequately covered in college coursework, or came as a surprise to you?
8. How would you describe a successful, as opposed to an unsuccessful, first-year teacher?
9. What metaphor would you use to describe your first-year teaching experiences? (Example: "First-year teaching is like . . .")
10. What advice would you give to individuals just entering the teaching profession?

Although these questions formed the backbone of the interviews, I did not limit my questions solely to this list. Based on the participant responses, additional probing questions were asked in order to elicit more detailed information. A complete transcript of each interview, including all the questions asked, along with participant responses, can be obtained upon request. In addition, follow-up phone calls, letters, and e-mail communiqués served to maintain contact between participants and myself, in order to facilitate open lines of communication, should further insights occur to participants after the initial interview concluded.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Data analysis was undertaken through coding for emergent themes or concepts arising from the interviews, rather than utilizing pre-determined theme categories. Preliminary data analysis began with the first interview, as I examined my field notes and listened to the interview tape. I continued to listen for themes, which became apparent during the interviews, and noted them in my interview field notes. Specific themes became evident across cases as I continued with the interviews.

Tapes were transcribed verbatim, and then returned to the participants for review and comment. Three participants returned the transcriptions with comments or corrections. The transcriptions were placed in eleven volumes, one for each school site. I then engaged in a rigorous analysis of these transcripts, involving coding on multiple levels. "The coding scheme can be quite simple, as in identifying a theme that can be illustrated with numerous incidents, quotes, and so on. Or it can be quite complex, with multilevels of coding for each incident" (Merriam, 1998, p. 164).

For the first level of detailed coding, I read each transcription and annotated themes and comments in the margins of the transcription documents, and then listened to the tapes again for clarification and corrections. I again read the transcriptions, using colored highlighters to mark selected passages and identify themes.

Six professional educators independently reviewed unmarked copies of the transcriptions, and also margin coded the documents, then returned them to me. I compared their coding schemes to mine, compiling a preliminary list of themes and the number of times each occurred in the annotations from this panel of educators.

Next, I cut up the highlighted versions of the transcriptions, removing extraneous material and leaving only the highlighted and annotated sections. I sorted these into a total of 22 groups, based on common themes, then regrouped them into five broad categories: Development of Self as Teacher; Interpersonal Relationships; Pre-service Preparation; Actions and Tasks Related to Teaching; and Induction into the Teaching Profession.

An examination of poetry written by interview participants served as an additional source of data. Seven of the 17 participants crafted verses, which they felt illuminated the experiences of the first-year teacher. I analyzed the poems, using the same coding techniques as those used for the interview transcriptions. Themes that developed from an examination of the poetry fell into the broad categories of Development of Self as a Teacher and Interpersonal Relationships.

Veracity and Transferability of the Study

Merriam (1998) suggested six basic strategies to enhance internal veracity (validity): (a) triangulation, (b) member checks, (c) long-term observation at the site, (d)

peer examination, (e) participatory or collaborative modes of research, and (f) identifying researcher's biases (pp. 204-205). I utilized triangulation using multiple sites, several different data sources, member checks, and peer review to establish internal veracity for this study.

Multiple perspectives within the same school amplified the veracity of findings; using multiple sites also enhanced the transferability and confirmability (generalizability) of the study results. "Using several sites, cases, situations . . . will allow the results to be applied by readers to a greater range of other situations" (Merriam, 1998, p.212). However, Merriam (1998) also cautioned that "a single case or small nonrandom sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (p. 208).

Eisner (1998) saw generalization in qualitative research as a much different concept than generalizability in quantitative research.

> The ability to generalize skills, images, and ideas across situations appropriately represents one form of human intelligence. It is the generalizing capacity of the image that leads us to look for certain qualities of classroom life, features in teaching, or aspects of discussion, rather than others. Once we secure images of excellence in these realms, we apply them to other aspects of the world to which we believe them to be relevant. For qualitative research, this means that the creation of an image—a vivid portrait of excellent teaching, for example—can become a prototype that can be used in the education of teachers or for the appraisal of teaching. Because qualitative writing is often vivid and concrete, its capacity for generating images is particularly strong. (p. 199)

Eisner went on to state that the researcher offers ideas and images to be considered, shared, reflected upon, and discussed. However, the readers need to determine the applicability of the research findings to their own particular situations (1998, pp. 204-205).

Johnson & Birkeland (2002) also addressed the issue of transferability in qualitative research in her study of first-year teacher career choices.

> The purposive sample of teachers we interviewed precludes us from generalizing to all new teachers in all settings, or even to all new teachers in similar settings. However, the respondents' accounts and appraisals are nonetheless informative, provocative and cautionary. They can assist policymakers and practitioners as they contemplate the needs of the next generation of teachers and assess competing strategies for recruiting them and supporting the early years of their work. The accounts can also guide the way for further research. (p. 9)

Examining additional data sources may contribute to placing the interviews within the school context and establishing internal veracity (Creswell, 1998). Yin (cited in Creswell, 1998) recommended utilizing documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts as possible sources of information. Eisner (1997) envisioned alternative forms of data, such as stories, films, diagrams, pictures, theater, and poetry, which acknowledge the variety of ways in which experiences can be coded. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Roehrig et al. (2002) represented current qualitative researchers, reiterating the importance of personal stories in gaining insights into specific experiences.

My research on first-year teachers and their experiences utilized poetry written by the research participants as an additional data collection method. Deeper meaning can often be found in everyday words and phrases, when a researcher takes the time to examine them closely, through a different lens (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Eisner, 1997). "We have poetry, that linguistic achievement whose meanings are paradoxically non-linguistic. Poetry was invented to say what words can never say. Poetry transcends the limits of language and evokes what cannot be articulated" (Eisner, 1997, p. 5). Poetry

encourages the reader to become more closely attuned to the insights of the participants, adding depth to the study, which represents one of the goals of qualitative research.

Hofmann (2003) described "impressionistic exhibits," which include creative works or objects of special interest, including poetry. He stated, "There are multiple ways to re-create a particular world" (p. 7). Sullivan (2000) suggested several ideas and questions for reflection, regarding engagement with the arts as a part of qualitative research:

> What is the nature of the researcher's attention? How do we learn to attend with keen eyes and fine sensibilities? Aesthetic vision engages a sensitivity to suggestion, to pattern, to that which is beneath the surface as well as to the surface itself. (pp. 211-212, 220)

Interview material closely emulates everyday conversation, and often presents ideas that easily lend themselves to transformation into verse. Additionally, the use of the poetry written by the first-year teachers enhanced the ability of the reader to empathize with the participants, painting verbal "portraits" of them, and enhancing the sense that what was being portrayed was real (Eisner, 1997).

Finally, internal and external school public relations documents, as well as print materials related to the new-teacher induction program in the school district under study, provided valuable information for this research. These items afforded insights into the orientation and staff development sessions planned for first-year teachers, and the ways in which this information was communicated to the program participants.

Upon completion of transcription and coding, the interview transcripts were returned to participants for review and validation of assigned codes, also known as "member checks." Professional educator colleagues, including building-level administrators and teachers, served as "critical friends" in order to ensure the internal

veracity of my conclusions. Dukes (cited in Creswell, 1998) suggested, "An outside reader can recognize the logic of the experience and how it matches his or her own experiences" (p. 207). These colleagues, knowledgeable in educational theory and practice, reviewed the interview transcripts, annotating these transcripts for key thoughts, ideas, and concepts to ensure that they "make sense" and ring true. "The 'text' should display honesty or authenticity about its own stance and about the position of the author" (Creswell, 1998, p. 196).

Dependability in Qualitative Research

Merriam (1998) further commented upon the idea of reliability in qualitative research: "Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. Qualitative research, however, is not conducted so that the laws of human behavior can be isolated" (p. 205). She suggested that the "consistency" or "dependability" of the results be considered: "Rather than demanding that outsiders get the same results, a researcher wishes outsiders to concur that, given the data collected, the results make sense—they are consistent and dependable" (p. 206).

External veracity can be established by viewing the study results from the perspective of those who will be reading the study (Merriam, 1998). These individuals will need to decide whether the study seems to reflect their own situations or settings, and whether the researcher's results can then be applied or transferred to these situations or settings. Providing enough detailed information and description regarding the study allows readers to examine the data and draw their own conclusions.

> Reader or user generalizability involves leaving the extent to which a study's findings apply to other situations up to the people in those situations. Nonetheless, the researcher has an obligation to provide enough detailed

> description of the study's context to enable readers to compare the "fit" with their situations. (Merriam, 1998, p. 211)

Timetable

The timetable for completion of the dissertation included completion of interviews by the end of July 2003. Transcription of the interview tapes, coding, and data analysis, as well as review and validation of these transcriptions by participants and by professional educators, was completed by the end of January 2004. Conclusions of the study and final dissertation work were complete and ready for defense by June 2004.

August 2001—February 2003	Search databases, amass research literature
September 2002—December 2002	Develop research plan, conduct pilot study
January 2003	Submit pilot study for Research Advisor review and topic approval
January--March 2003	Complete dissertation proposal
March--April 2003	Obtain committee approval of dissertation proposal
	Obtain IRB approval
April—June 2003	Conduct interviews
July 2003—January 2004	Transcribe interviews and analyze data
August 2003—June 2004	Continue work on dissertation
	Defend dissertation

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE CONTEXT FOR THE STUDY

Every building has its own kind of environment and personality to it.

—Faye, a first-year teacher

Introduction

This chapter includes (a) a description of the community in which the study took place; (b) a description of the school district in which the study took place; (c) descriptions of the individual schools in which the participants taught; (d) a description of the participant population; and (e) individual participant profiles. The information contained in this chapter reflects the context of the school community and the school district at the time when this study took place.

The individual participant profiles for each school are presented after each school description. In order to ensure confidentiality, the names of the community, school district, individual elementary schools, and participants have been changed.

Description of the School Community

The sources of information for the description of this Midwestern school community include: (a) the Chamber of Commerce website and (b) the Convention and Visitors Bureau website.

Midwestern City School District is located within the boundaries of Midwestern City. According to the Chamber of Commerce website, Midwestern City ranks among the top 10 largest cities in the state of Indiana, with a population of about 107,000. At the time of the 2000 census, 82% of the population of Midwestern City was White, 11% was Black, 5% was Hispanic or Latino, and the remaining 2% included Asian, American Indian, or other races. The median annual household income is $40,000. About 82% of the residents achieved a high-school diploma, and 23% earned an undergraduate degree.

Midwestern City was founded in the 1800s, growing quickly as a center for business and manufacturing, in part due to its location near a river. Access to passenger and freight railways, and a local airport which schedules more than 40 flights daily to over 100 cities, aids in promoting the growth of these local firms. In addition, an interstate highway, as well as several state and national highways, provide convenient and easy access to Midwestern City. Both inter and intra city public bus transportation assist residents in getting around their city.

The climate of Midwestern City includes four full seasons. January is the coldest month, with an average temperature of 24 degrees Fahrenheit; residents can expect annual snowfall of about 71 inches. July is the warmest month, with average temperatures of 73 degrees Fahrenheit. Annual total precipitation averages 36 inches.

Trade, transportation, utilities, and professional and business services form the nucleus of industry in Midwestern City. Since Midwestern City lies within close driving distance to several major cities, cultural events and attractions abound for residents. Local entertainment and cultural activities include theatrical and musical performances, art exhibits, a minor league baseball team, a kayak course, and athletic facilities that

support tennis, basketball, ice skating, skate boarding, racquetball, golf, and track. In addition to Midwestern City School District, over 70 day-care facilities, more than 15 private schools, eight colleges and universities, and three technical schools are located within the city boundaries.

Description of the School District

The sources of information used for this description of Midwestern City School District include: (a) my observations; (b) information obtained from the Indiana Department of Education website; and (c) the *Recommended School Budget* publication, provided each year by the school district.

The Midwestern City School District was organized on July 1, 1962, by recommendation of the County Commission for the Reorganization of School Districts, and ratified by voters in a special election. The boundaries of the school district are contained within 190 square miles, and have an estimated population of approximately 161,000 people. The school district consists of Midwestern City, as well as the towns of Christian and Markstown, and seven other townships in the county. According to the school data section of the Indiana Department of Education website (http://www.doe.state.in.us/), Midwestern City School District is classified demographically as a metropolitan school district.

Midwestern City School District maintains 34 school buildings containing over 4,190,000 square feet of space located over 600 acres. Five additional buildings owned by the school district contain over 415,000 square feet located on over 50 acres. The total building inventory has an estimated replacement cost of $550,560,000.

A seven-member Board of School Trustees guides the creation, review, and revision of policy for the school district. These elected officials serve 4-year terms. Two Trustees are elected on an "at-large" basis, and five represent specific geographic areas. As one of the largest employers in the county, Midwestern City School District employs approximately 1,500 certified and 1,400 non-certified individuals. The average teacher salary is $46,200, and the average teacher age is 47 years.

Schools in the Midwestern City School District enroll 21,674 total students, contained in a range of grades from Pre-kindergarten through 12th grade. Four high schools, five middle schools, and 23 elementary schools exist in the district, as well as one alternative school and one school that houses programs for kindergarten through adults, for a total of 34 schools. Additionally, the school district operates vehicle maintenance, central office, and service buildings.

Of the total number of students enrolled in the Midwestern City School District, 4.5% participate in alternative education programs, 24.7% of students receive Special Education services, and 6% of students are classified as gifted and talented. Vocational education programs enroll 2% of the high-school students. Minority students number 53.6% of the total student population. In addition, 55% receive free lunches and/or textbook assistance, and 10% of the students are classified as Limited English Proficiency students.

The attendance rate for Midwestern City School District is 93.4%, compared to the state average of 95.7%. About 71% of students in the district achieve high-school diplomas, compared to the state average of 91%. The suspension and/or expulsion rate of students in Midwestern City School District is 31 per 100 students. Only 54% of the

district population occupies the same homes at they did in 1995. About 41% of the students enrolled in the Midwestern City School District achieved passing scores on both the English and Math portions of the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP).

Descriptions of the Individual Schools

The information used for these descriptions was obtained from (a) my personal observations; (b) the Indiana Department of Education website; (c) the *Recommended School Budget* publication, provided each year by the school district; and (d) the first-year teacher participants in this study. All data reported in this section were current for the time the study took place. Eleven different elementary school sites, out of 23 total elementary schools within Midwestern City School District, were represented in this study.

The participant profiles for each school follow the school descriptions. Each first-year teacher participant is identified by name, as well as by a quote taken from the interview transcriptions. I chose a quote for each individual that I believe best characterizes that individual participant. The quote thus gives the reader a snapshot of the participant in just a few words.

Deer Park Elementary School

Deer Park Elementary School occupies 30 acres on the northern fringe of Midwestern City, in a residential neighborhood that includes a combination of affluent homes and small, run-down dwellings. Deer Park is located relatively close to a major highway, shopping area, and university campus. Spacious athletic playing fields, a

school playground, and a nearby high school can be found just adjacent to Deer Park Elementary School.

Deer Park opened its doors in 1962. Its low brick and concrete architectural style resembles several other buildings in Midwestern City School District. Deer Park houses 41 classrooms, with a total area of 108,000 square feet. The building includes its own library, computer lab, and gymnasium, and is structurally sound.

Deer Park currently enrolls 620 students, in Grades Pre-kindergarten through sixth, with a student population of 71.8% White, 16.5% Black, 2% Hispanic, 1% Asian, 2% Native American, and 6.5% Multiracial. Thirty-six percent of the students receive free lunch. Deer Park's attendance rate is 95.1%; this number reflects its lowest attendance rate in 6 years.

Thirty-seven full-time teachers instruct Deer Park students. The average teacher is 52 years of age, with an average of 20 years of classroom experience. The average class size includes 23 students, although this varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Deer Park serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including autism spectrum disorder, communication disorders, and orthopedic impairment. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in physical education, art, and music. For the testing date in September, 62.2% of Deer Park students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP). During the last year, no students were expelled from Deer Park Elementary School; however, the IDOE website lists 94 suspensions for Deer Park, 2 of which reflect drug, alcohol, or weapons violations.

Terry: "It means showing them grace when they need it." A single, White male in his 20s, Terry taught a group of 20 fifth-graders at Deer Park Elementary. Terry shared his status of first-year teacher with one other teacher on staff. Terry graduated from a small, private university, with a degree in education.

Prior to beginning his first year in the classroom, Terry worked as a substitute teacher while finishing his undergraduate degree. In his most recent position, Terry filled a teaching position that was vacated when the teacher abruptly transferred to another school after the start of the school year. He taught part time in a third-grade classroom, and also tutored primary grade students identified as needing extra help.

At the time of our interview, Terry expressed relief to have found a teaching position at Deer Park, after wondering whether he would be substitute teaching for another year. Terry worked hard, and cared deeply about his students. His comments during our interview were indicative of his sensitivity to the emotional needs of his students. Terry's quiet, calm nature served him well when dealing with his pre-adolescent youngsters. Terry voiced appreciation for the support and help provided to him by his principal and colleagues at Deer Park. He was one of two male teachers participating in this study.

Eastside Elementary School

Eastside Elementary School sits upon six acres on the southeast side of Midwestern City. Its inner city, residential neighborhood forms a part of an older and very traditional part of town. Older homes and small, local stores, including grocery, video, tailor, and pet grooming shops, surround Eastside's property. Just a few blocks west of Eastside Elementary lies "The Zone," an area characterized by prostitution,

crime, and "crack houses." Eastside's playground equipment sits on concrete, enclosed by chain-link fencing.

Eastside Elementary School opened its doors in 1910. The tall, box-like brick building is composed of three floors and houses 31 classrooms, with a total of 76,992 square feet. Although the building is structurally sound, mechanical systems are beyond their expected service life and will soon need replacement. Eastside Elementary also has its own library, computer lab, and gymnasium.

Eastside currently enrolls 659 students, in Kindergarten through sixth grade, with a student population of 55.7% White, 28% Black, 4% Hispanic, 2% Asian, 1% Native American, and 8.7% Multiracial. Forty-nine percent of the students receive free lunch. Eastside's attendance rate is 93.9%.

Thirty-six full-time teachers instruct Eastside students. The average teacher is 44 years of age, and the average teacher has 15 years of classroom experience. The average class size of 24 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Eastside serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including autism spectrum disorder, communication disorders, learning disabilities, and moderate mental handicaps. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in physical education, art, and both vocal and instrumental music. When tested in September, 49% of Eastside Elementary students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP).

During the last year, two students were expelled from Eastside Elementary School; one of these involved a drug, alcohol, or weapons offense. A total of 338 students were suspended from school during the course of the school year. Both Eastside

teacher participants in this study, Ardis and Dawn, began their first year of teaching after the bell rang to signify the start of the first day of school.

Ardis: "I have been the school football." Ardis described herself as a married, White female in her 20s. Ardis's teaching assignment presented her with a difficult challenge. She taught a "split schedule," consisting of 19 morning kindergarteners, and 12 "remediation" third-graders in the afternoon. Ardis received her certification in education, and she graduated from a large, state-supported college.

During our interview, Ardis often spoke of the disjointed nature of her first year of teaching. Ardis related a story of her job interview with the principal: Walking in, she thought she was applying to substitute teach. In reality, Ardis walked into the school the following Monday as a full-time teacher, having had 2 days over the weekend to prepare her classroom. Ardis characterized herself as the "school football," since she changed teaching assignments several times during the school year.

The ability to quickly create artwork served as one of Ardis's strengths. This talent subsequently facilitated her entry into the school culture, as other teachers asked her to draw posters or illustrations for their classrooms. Ardis also stated that commercial art had been her first career choice, before she came to teaching. On difficult days, she contemplated returning to that profession.

Dawn: "I look at the kids through rose-colored glasses." Dawn characterized herself as a married, White female in her early 20s, one of four first-year teachers at Eastside Elementary School. Although Dawn attended Eastside Elementary as a child, she still felt that her education at a small private college did not adequately prepare her for life as a kindergarten teacher in the urban scene.

Throughout the course of the interview, Dawn often mentioned the word "chaos." Beginning her teaching career in October, more than 1 month after the start of the school year, served to imbed this word still more deeply in her mind. Her unsettled beginning experience seemed to have greatly impacted Dawn's view of her first year of teaching. Dawn related that she felt unsupported by her principal, and often had to seek out help and materials on her own. Dawn also mentioned experiencing difficulties with using her voice to command attention, since she spoke quietly. She was working on developing a more assertive tone and manner.

Haywood Elementary School

Haywood Elementary School occupies seven acres on the far east end of Midwestern City. Haywood lies in a residential neighborhood, near industrial plants and small, run-down homes. Grassy lawns surround Haywood; its playground area remains unfenced and open to children who play there after school hours.

Students began attending Haywood Elementary School in 1929. The light brick building includes many windows, which often display colorful student cutouts and art projects. Haywood Elementary School includes 32 classrooms, with a total of 65,551 square feet. Although the building is structurally sound, some mechanical systems will soon need to be repaired or replaced. Haywood Elementary also has its own library, computer lab, and gymnasium.

Haywood currently enrolls 532 students, in Kindergarten through sixth grade, with a student population of 14% White, 32.5% Black, 45.3% Hispanic, 1% Asian, 0% Native American, and 7.1% Multiracial. Seventy-one percent of the students receive free lunch. Haywood's attendance rate is 95.5%.

The staff at Haywood currently includes 40 full-time teachers. The average teacher is 36 years old, and has 9 years of classroom experience. The average class size of 17 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Haywood serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including communication disorders, learning disabilities, and both mild and moderate mental handicaps. With its large Hispanic and Latino population, 145 Haywood students receive English as a Second Language Services. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in physical education, visual arts, general music, and beginning band. Special reading classes assist those students reading below grade level. According to school performance data, 53% of Haywood Elementary students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP) at the last testing date in September.

During the last year, no students were expelled from Haywood Elementary School. Out of the 43 suspensions that occurred, none of them involved a drug, alcohol, or weapons offense.

Elke: "We will never let another new teacher come into this building and feel the way we did." A married, White female in her 20s, Elke taught third-graders at Haywood Elementary School. Eighteen students comprised her class load; she was one of five new teachers at her school of 45 teachers. Elke attended a small private college, with elementary education as her primary area of certification. At the time of our interview, Elke was enrolled in a graduate program at a Christian college, leading to attainment of her Master of Education degree.

During our interview, Elke described the difficulties she encountered in dealing with classroom management and with the parents of her students. She also voiced her concerns about the amount of teacher turnover at her school. Elke expressed disbelief at her own naiveté during her first year as a teacher. During our discussion of teacher induction processes at her school, Elke told me about the informal teacher networking and support system developed among the new teachers at her school. These teachers made a vow to accept responsibility for supporting other new teachers who came to Haywood.

Kline Elementary School

Kline Elementary School occupies eight acres on the northwest side of Midwestern City, in an inner-city, residential neighborhood. Kline Elementary is located near one of the high schools, in a high-crime area of the city.

Kline Elementary School's students first walked through the schoolhouse doors in 1972. The school building is made of concrete, originally housing an "open concept" program. The construction of interior walls changed the building layout, resulting in a traditional, self-contained classroom arrangement.

Kline Elementary School encompasses 35 classrooms, with a total of 84,858 square feet. The building is structurally sound, with well-functioning mechanical systems, although minor repairs would enhance the usefulness and aesthetics of the school's physical plant. Kline Elementary includes a library, computer lab, and gymnasium.

The student population at Kline numbers 611 students in Kindergarten through sixth grade. The student population is characterized as 45% White, 31% Black, 14%

Hispanic, 2% Asian, 0% Native American, and 7% Multiracial. Seventy percent of the students receive free lunch. Kline's attendance rate is 94.3%, the lowest it has been in 7 years.

Kline's faculty includes 34 full-time teachers. The average teacher age is 41 years, and the average teacher experience level is 11 years of classroom experience. The average class size of 24 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Kline serves general education students, as well as students with special needs, including orthopedic impairment and mild mental handicaps. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in physical education, art, and both vocal and instrumental music. According to school performance data, 45% of Kline Elementary students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP) at the last testing date in September.

During the last year, Kline Elementary had no student expulsions. However, out of the 228 student suspensions for the year, 4 involved drugs, alcohol, or weapons violations.

Jan: "Beginning teaching is like you are the new man on campus." Jan taught 29 students in the sixth grade, and was one of five new teachers at Kline Elementary School. Jan characterized herself as single, White, and female, in her 20s, and a graduate of a large, state-supported college, where she majored in education.

Jan referred to her first year in the classroom as "complicated and overwhelming." Coming from substitute teaching in kindergarten, Jan found teaching sixth grade to be quite a different world. Jan spoke of her need to develop strong

classroom management techniques in order to deal with the headstrong and aggressive personalities of some female students in her class.

Jan also turned out to be quite a reflective thinker; during the interview, she remarked on her plans to do things differently in the future. She struggled with her own understanding of the social issues, such as anger, poverty, and drug abuse, that daily impacted her ability to engage her students in classroom instruction.

Lancer Elementary School

Lancer Elementary School resides upon 11 acres of ground on the west side of Midwestern City, in a residential area. Most of the medium-sized homes around Lancer Elementary were constructed during World War II, using similar house layout plans. Just a few blocks away, a main street can be seen. Since this street runs through the center of town, shopping areas, fast-food franchises, car dealerships, and banks have grown up right alongside the street. One of the Midwestern City School District's high-school campuses can be seen from the southwest windows of Lancer. Also, one of the largest "gangs" in the city "owns the turf" of the park just north of the elementary building.

Classes began at Lancer Elementary School in 1957. The building, with its 14 classrooms, resembles several rectangular, brick boxes joined together. With its total square footage of only 49,600 feet, Lancer Elementary could be classified as small, compared to the other schools in the district. Numerous improvements to Lancer would enhance the total instructional program, although the building is structurally sound. Corridors, gym floors, and roof sections could all benefit from replacement or repair. Like the other schools described in this study, Lancer Elementary houses a library, computer lab, and gymnasium.

Lancer Elementary School currently enrolls 321 students, in Kindergarten through sixth grade, with a student population comprising 14.8% White, 44% Black, 11% Hispanic, 28% Asian, 2% Native American, and 0% Multiracial. Fifty-nine percent of the students receive free lunch. Lancer's current attendance rate is 95.1%, although its attendance rate just a few years ago averaged 99%.

Nineteen full-time teachers are employed at Lancer. The average teacher is 45 years of age, with an average of 14 years of classroom experience. The average class size of 24 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Lancer serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including visual and hearing impairments, communication disorders, and learning disabilities. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in physical education, art, and instrumental music. Lancer Elementary School also provides special reading instruction for students falling below grade level in reading. According to school performance data, 56% of Lancer Elementary students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP) at the last testing date in September.

During the last year, no students were expelled from Lancer Elementary School, although 3 of the 87 suspensions involved a drug, alcohol, or weapons offense. Two teachers from Lancer Elementary School, Faye and Yvette, participated in this research study, spending an entire afternoon describing their first-year teacher experiences. They often mentioned their appreciation for the support and encouragement of their building principal during their first year in the classroom. Faye and Yvette participated in the interview together.

Faye: "Where do you leave the job?" Faye described herself as a single, White female in her 20s. She taught sixth grade at Lancer Elementary School. Faye represented one of the growing numbers of "second career" teachers, who bring with them a wealth of life experience. Before changing careers, Faye worked in a business setting. However, none of her business experiences prepared her for her job as a teacher.

Faye spoke at length about her interactions with her students, particularly her efforts to shape the lives of young women in her class. She saw teaching as part of her mission in life, and dedicated many hours to creating interesting lessons for her students. She expressed her feelings of dismay at the amount of time she spent, either at school or at home, planning lessons, grading student work, or discussing issues and concerns related to teaching. Faye also talked about her upcoming marriage to a fellow teacher.

Yvette: "I had that 'save the world' type attitude." Yvette taught at the same school as Faye. She was a single, Multiracial female in her 20s, and taught a first grade class of 23 children. Education was her primary area of certification, and she was educated at a small, private college.

Although Yvette struggled with the same problems as other first-year teachers, she willingly took on the extra duty responsibility of coaching student athletes in team sports. Yvette believed this to be important, as it provided an additional connection between herself and her students. One area that Yvette discussed at length during the interview centered upon her difficulties in trying to reconcile the difference between her background and that of her students, since Yvette came from a relatively affluent, New England upbringing.

Martin Elementary School

Martin Elementary School occupies seven acres of ground in an old, residential neighborhood in the heart of the west side, inner-city area of Midwestern City. Martin Elementary takes up most of its yard area, so the playground equipment rests on concrete, surrounded by a chain-link fence.

Martin opened its doors in 1936, and its physical plant resembles other schoolhouses built during the same era. Martin Elementary School looks a lot like a tall, red brick box. Martin houses 23 classrooms, with a total area of 56,771 square feet. Around the year 1950, the addition of classroom space enlarged the capacity of the building. Miscellaneous repairs and renovations occurred throughout the life of the school. The building includes its own library, computer lab, and gymnasium, and is structurally sound; however, mechanical systems require constant repair in order to remain functional. Generally speaking, most of the system components are now beyond their expected functional life, so numerous improvements loom in Martin's future.

Martin Elementary currently enrolls 336 students, in first grade through sixth grade, with a student population makeup of 24.8% White, 64% Black, 2.5% Hispanic, 0% Asian, 0% Native American, and 9% Multiracial. Of the total student body, 51% receive free lunch. Martin's attendance rate is 94.3%.

Twenty-six full-time teachers instruct Martin students. The average teacher is 44 years of age, and the average teacher possesses 13 years of classroom experience. The average class size of 20 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Martin serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including communication disorders, and both visual and hearing impairments. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in physical education, art, and both vocal and instrumental music. Martin Elementary also provides special reading instruction for students reading below grade level. At the last testing date in September, 47% of Martin students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP).

During the last year, no students were expelled from Martin Elementary School; however, the IDOE website lists 110 suspensions for Martin. One of these suspensions reflects a drug, alcohol, or weapons violation.

At the time this research study began, Martin Elementary School seemed to be experiencing a great deal of teacher turnover. Since some of this occurred after the school year already started, Martin Elementary served as the home to several first-year teachers, who chose to accept teaching positions after the official beginning of the school year. Of the first-year teacher participants in this study, those from Martin Elementary most often spoke of what might be characterized as a "veteran-oriented" school culture. They also commented upon the uneasy relationship existing between the principal and the teachers.

Angel: "You are scared to death on the inside; but be bold, don't let the kids know it." Angel was a single, White female teacher in her 20s, and one of four first-year teachers at Martin Elementary. She taught a group of 17 children in the second grade. Angel graduated with her education degree from a small private college.

Another study participant referred to Angel as a potential interviewee for this study. The referring individual surmised that Angel was shocked by some of the things she saw or heard in the urban public schools, since Angel came from a very conservative, small Christian college.

Angel strongly believed she had been sent by God to make a difference in the lives of her children. During our interview, she frequently referred to her Christian worldview. Angel actively sought out other Christians at Martin Elementary, believing that they formed a vital support group for her. Angel also prayed for her students each day, and encouraged others to do the same. Angel's active and visible Christian faith made her unique among the other participants in this study.

Cat: "You make adjustments, and you learn to accept things, to make greatness out of the things you have." Cat described herself as a single, White female in her 20s. She taught sixth grade at Martin Elementary. Cat attended both private and state-supported colleges, with elementary education as her primary area of certification and work.

Cat referred often in our interview to the "overwhelming" nature of teaching. She had accepted her teaching position with just 2 days to prepare for her students. Cat also described the difficulties she encountered in dealing with the social issues her students brought to school with them.

Characterizing herself as "stubborn," Cat proved to be one of the most resilient members of the participant population. Cat stated that the mentor assigned to her "did not even know my name until Christmas." She also expressed surprise at the degree of friction between the principal and teachers at Martin Elementary.

Christie: "You're swimming, and you think you can barely keep your head above water. But the whole time you're swimming, you're growing." A graduate of a state-supported college, and a married, White female in her 20s, Christie served as a teacher of 22 fourth-graders. She stated that education was her college major. Along with three other new teachers at her school, Christie shared the distinction of being a first-year teacher.

During our interview, Christie talked about the difficulties she experienced in balancing her life as a teacher with her life as a wife, and as a mother of a 3-month-old baby girl. She also found difficulty dealing with the social problems and issues that beset her students, sometimes preventing them from learning.

Christie described a "veteran-oriented" culture at Martin Elementary, where, she believed, care and compassion had been replaced by fatigue and apathy. She relied on prayer to get her through the tough times. Christie described herself as "still in the shock phase."

Julie: "Wake up and smell the coffee." A married, White female in her 20s, Julie taught third-graders at Martin Elementary School. Of the 30 teachers at the school, 4 of them were just starting their professional careers. Julie attended both private and state-supported universities while working on her teaching license. Prior to attaining her credentials, Julie worked in food service and childcare; thus, she also became a member of the growing group of "second career" teachers.

Julie entered the teaching profession in a manner that might send individuals with less strength of character running for the nearest exit. She accepted her teaching position well into the school year, and found her classroom unstructured and chaotic, with few

teaching materials available and no lesson plans in sight. Other than her grade level partners, Julie found the faculty to be unwelcoming, often seeming on the verge of open warfare with the principal.

Midtown Elementary School

Midtown Elementary School sits upon three acres in the downtown area of Midwestern City. Midtown Elementary, true to its name, can be found amidst downtown parking garages, office buildings, and medical complexes. Midtown Elementary is also close to older, historic parts of town, as well as cultural and artistic venues. However, Midtown lacks the wide open, green spaces characteristic of school buildings that are less land-locked than it.

Midtown Elementary School opened its doors in 1929. The red brick building occupies 62,250 square feet of space. A 1966 classroom addition provided more space, but other improvements are needed throughout. Midtown Elementary faculty, students, and their families patiently await the day for the scheduled renovation of Midtown to begin, but no one knows whether this will become a reality. As is the case for most other Midwestern City schools, Midtown Elementary has its own library, computer lab, and gymnasium.

Midtown currently enrolls 619 students, in grades Kindergarten through sixth grade, with a student population of 18% White, 55% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% Asian, 0% Native American, and 6% Multiracial. Fifty-six percent of the students receive free lunch. Midtown's attendance rate is 94.5%.

Midtown's faculty includes 37 full-time teachers.. The average teacher is 41 years of age, with 11 years of classroom experience. The average class size of 23 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

As in other Midwestern City Schools, the instructional program at Midtown serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including communication disorders, visual, hearing, and orthopedic impairments, and moderate mental handicaps. In addition to core academic subjects, Midtown students receive instruction in physical education, art, and both vocal and instrumental music. A special reading program housed at Midtown assists those students who are reading below grade level. At the last testing date in September, 48% of Midtown Elementary students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP).

During the last year, Midtown Elementary School did not expel any students. However, of the 85 suspensions, 3 involved a drug, alcohol, or weapons offense.

Fleur: "Run, run as fast as you can, you can't catch me." Fleur represented one of the growing number of second-career adults who chose to return to college to complete a teaching certification, following an initial career in a different field of work. Fleur worked as a deli manager, as a secretary, and then as a teacher's aide before she completed her teaching degree and sought a classroom of her own. These other career experiences did not prevent Fleur from experiencing the same periods of fatigue and disillusionment experienced by her first-year teacher colleagues.

Fleur was a divorced, mixed race female in her 40s, teaching a group of 24 fourth graders at Midtown Elementary. Fleur did not know if there were any other first-year teachers at her school, nor did she know the total number of teachers at her school.

Her conversation during our interview focused on classroom management issues. Fleur clearly felt overwhelmed at the magnitude of the task before her. She expressed regret that she "did not love the job," since she had quite enjoyed her role as a classroom teacher's aide. Fleur also voiced uncertainty about whether she would return to the teaching profession the following year.

Northside Elementary School

Northside Elementary School received its name because it owns the distinction of being the farthest north of the schools in Midwestern City. Northside's nearly rural location in a residential neighborhood places it in a somewhat isolated position, compared to the other schools in the district. Homes near Northside can be described as primarily affluent, with some pockets of run-down, scrubby homes.

Northside Elementary faculty began educating students in 1965. The physical plant appears modern and stylish, with a rounded portico and attractive entrance. A 1970 addition provided additional classroom space. Northside Elementary contains 31 classrooms, with a total square footage of 67,729 square feet. The building includes its own library, computer lab, and gymnasium, and is structurally sound, with well-functioning mechanical systems, although future upgrades will be needed.

Northside Elementary's current enrollment numbers 484 students, in grades first through sixth, with a student population of 58% White, 34.5% Black, 7% Hispanic, 0% Asian, 0% Native American, and 0% Multiracial. Fifty-eight percent of the students receive free lunches. Northside's attendance rate is 97.1%, its highest rate of student attendance in 7 years.

Thirty-three full-time teachers provide instruction for Northside students. The average teacher is 45 years of age, with 13 years of classroom experience. The average class size of 15 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Northside serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including communication disorders, hearing and visual impairments, and moderate mental handicaps. In addition to core academic subjects, Northside Elementary students receive instruction in physical education, art, and vocal and instrumental music. A specialized reading program provides assistance for students who currently read below grade level. At the last September testing date, 41.5% of Northside Elementary students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP).

During the last year, no students were expelled from Northside Elementary School. However, the IDOE website lists 109 suspensions for Northside, 2 of which reflect drug, alcohol, or weapons violations.

Savannah: "Walking in there that first day, those kids are kind of like dogs; they can sense when you're scared." Savannah characterized herself as a married, White female in her 20s. Savannah taught a group of 23 children, all sixth-graders. She received her education at a large, state-supported university, with education as her primary area of study.

Savannah discussed her experiences with practice teaching and staff development opportunities in different parts of the world and of the United States. Since she and her husband had moved several times, Savannah had the advantage of participating in several different programs for staff development, in different school districts. Throughout the

interview, she contributed interesting and valuable insights on teacher education in New Zealand, where she did her practice teaching.

Savannah used the word "overwhelmed" repeatedly throughout the interview. She expressed frustration with the likelihood that she would be moving to a different school for the next school year, due to changes in the school district and teaching staff. Savannah stated that this was a "very negative" year for her. She also felt constrained by the prescriptive nature of the school curriculum guides, and longed for the interdisciplinary units she helped to create during her brief stay in New Zealand.

Poplar Elementary School

Poplar Elementary School occupies a tract of land consisting of only three acres, located on the northeast side of Midwestern City, in an inner-city area. Although Poplar Elementary lies just south of a university and its surrounding affluent neighborhoods, the Poplar neighborhood encompasses families living in poverty, homes with no appliances, yards without grass, and street-corner drug sales. Poplar's playground equipment and basketball backboards stand on an island of concrete, enclosed by chain-link fencing, although a large city park lies just to the east of the Popular Elementary playground. The fencing must be locked at nighttime, in order to prevent local thieves from taking away the maintenance equipment, or young hoodlums from vandalizing the school. Bullet holes in the school windows were quite common.

Poplar Elementary School welcomed its first students in 1951, and houses 19 classrooms, with a total of 70,596 square feet. The school exterior presents a rather institutional appearance, with its light-colored brick and concrete walls and its lack of walkways. Although the building is structurally sound, with good mechanical systems,

masonry and doors need repair and replacement. A 1993 addition to the school provided a cafeteria, kitchen, and several new classrooms. Poplar Elementary has its own library, computer lab, and gymnasium, as do most other Midwestern City schools.

Poplar currently enrolls 329 students, in Kindergarten through sixth grade, with a student population of 19% White, 56% Black, 17% Hispanic, 1.5% Asian, 1% Native American, and 6% Multiracial. Fifty-five percent of the students receive free lunches. Poplar's attendance rate is 94.5%.

Twenty full-time teachers instruct Poplar Elementary students. The average teacher is 38 years of age, with an average of 11 years of classroom experience. The average class size of 24 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Poplar serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including autism spectrum disorder, communication disorders, visual and hearing impairments, and learning disabilities. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in physical education, art, and both vocal and instrumental music. A special reading program provides help to students reading below grade level. At the last September testing date, 49.5% of Poplar Elementary students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP). During the last year, no students were expelled from Poplar Elementary School, although 3 of the 62 suspensions involved a drug, alcohol, or weapons offense.

Peggy: "It can't get much worse than yesterday." Peggy was a married, White female in her 30s. She taught a group of 21 third-graders at Poplar Elementary School. Peggy was one of two first-year teachers this year at her school.

Peggy received her education at a large public university. Interestingly enough, she began her career with a prestigious company in the southern U.S.A., serving as a computer programmer and trainer. Upon discovering her love of working with people in an instructional capacity, she returned to college to seek teacher certification, exchanging a promising career in computer technology for a career in classroom teaching.

During our interview, Peggy expressed many concerns with the current methods used by some universities to prepare teachers to enter the teaching profession. Although describing herself as "very organized," Peggy still felt overwhelmed at the magnitude of the job. She also talked about her frustrations in trying to meet the needs of her students, when they brought to school so many different learning challenges and physical, social, and emotional deficiencies.

Southside Elementary School

Southside Elementary School occupies three acres on the southeast side of Midwestern City, in an inner city, residential neighborhood. Southside, like Eastside Elementary School, lies within "The Zone," an area of high crime, prostitution, and drug sales. The school lies within sight of one of the Midwestern City School District secondary schools, and within walking distance of athletic fields and a golf course.

The school building was constructed in 1961, with additional classrooms added in 1963, and is characterized by its single story, concrete and brick construction. Southside houses 27 classrooms, with a total area of 42,628 square feet. The building includes its own library, computer lab, and gymnasium, and is structurally sound and in good condition. Mechanical systems are fair, with upgrades scheduled for the near future.

Needed improvements to the building include sidewalk and window repair, and additional electrical outlets for classrooms.

Southside currently enrolls 325 students, in grades Pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, with a student population of 17% White, 35.5% Black, 43% Hispanic, 0% Asian, 0% Native American, and 5% Multiracial. Out of the total student body, 78% receive free lunches. Southside's attendance rate is 95.2%; this number reflects its highest attendance rate in 6 years.

Twenty-six full-time teachers educate Southside students. The average teacher is 41.5 years of age; the average teacher experience level is 11 years in the classroom. The average class size of 16 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Southside serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including communication disorders, learning disabilities, hearing, visual, orthopedic, and other health impairments, and moderate mental handicaps. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in physical education, art, and both vocal and instrumental music. Southside Elementary also houses a specialized reading program, to provide assistance for students reading below grade level. According to school performance data, 41% of Southside students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP) at the last testing date in September.

During the last year, no students were expelled from Southside Elementary School. However, the IDOE website lists 98 suspensions for Southside, 3 of which reflect drug, alcohol, or weapons violations.

Corazon: "They think teachers don't do anything else but school." First-grade teacher Corazon characterized herself as a married, White female in her 20s. Twenty boys and girls comprised Corazon's class at Southside Elementary School. Corazon attended a small, private school, and education was her primary area of study.

Corazon described herself as a "self-starter," a person who did not wait around for someone else to provide her with answers or assistance. She went after ideas and resources herself! According to Corazon, an observer would see little of interest in her classroom on the late spring day of our interview, as her room was full of boxes. Corazon stated she was packing up to move out of her room, not knowing if or where she would be assigned to teach in the fall.

Westside Elementary School

Westside Elementary School can be found in the center of a large, grassy area of 17 acres on the west side of Midwestern City, in an inner-city, residential neighborhood, an older and very traditional part of town. Westside Elementary is surrounded by older homes, and lies within walking distance of small, local stores, including ethnic restaurants, a bakery, grocery, auto repair, gun shop, and liquor store. Westside Elementary School adjoins a large city park. The population of the community surrounding Westside Elementary School has changed markedly over the last 30 years, from an area comprised of mainly families of eastern European descent, to a neighborhood composed of mainly Black and Hispanic families.

Westside Elementary School first opened its doors in 1910. The original imposing brick structure was replaced in 2003 with a new building. The school houses 36 classrooms, with a total of 97,694 square feet. Westside Elementary also has its own

library, computer lab, and gymnasium, similar to most of the other schools in the Midwestern City School District.

Westside currently enrolls 809 students, in Kindergarten through sixth grade, with a student population of 9% White, 42% Black, 43% Hispanic, 0% Asian, 0% Native American, and 6% Multiracial. The free lunch population at Westside includes 74% of the students. Westside's attendance rate is 94.8%.

Fifty-two full-time teachers provide instruction for Westside students. The average teacher is 42 years of age, with 10.5 years of classroom experience. The average class size of 19 students in the classroom setting varies from grade level to grade level.

The instructional program at Westside serves general education students as well as students with special needs, including communication disorders, learning disabilities, and visual, hearing, and orthopedic impairment. In addition to core academic subjects, students receive instruction in physical education, art, and both vocal and instrumental music. Westside students also receive extra reading instruction if they fall below grade level in reading achievement. At the last testing opportunity, 39.4% of Westside Elementary students passed the Indiana Statewide Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP).

During the last year, no students were expelled from Westside Elementary School. Of the 171 suspensions at Westside, 6 involved a drug, alcohol, or weapons offense.

Both of the first-year teachers at Westside Elementary School participated in this study. Both of them taught sixth grade, in adjoining classrooms. By the end of their interview, I began to feel as if the two of them were really just one person.

Maria: "I'm thinking you are a blind-folded person who's been spun around on the roof of a skyscraper, and you're told to walk." A sixth-grade teacher in her 30s, Maria was a married, White female. Maria attended more than one college before attaining her education degree. She also worked in business and childcare before choosing to enter the teaching profession.

Throughout our interview, Maria repeatedly stated her frustration with the negative behaviors exhibited by her sixth-grade students. Her attention to their behavior seemed at times to overshadow her attention to their learning. Maria also voiced her concerns about her inability to effectively balance her family responsibilities with her school duties.

Both Maria and Mitchell characterized their school in ways that could be associated with the descriptions of "veteran oriented" school cultures. Both of them discussed their concerns that administrator preoccupation with maintaining the condition of the new school building outweighed any concern for student learning.

Mitchell: "I saw a picture the other day on Vietnam, and I thought, some days I feel like this is it." Mitchell was a married, White male teacher of sixth-graders. Entering the classroom as a "40-something" adult, Mitchell worked in higher education, the healthcare field, and business, before joining the ranks of American public school educators. Mitchell's class of 28 boys and girls could be found at the same school in which Maria taught; the two of them taught next door to each other.

Mitchell presented quite an interesting character study. His gruff and opinionated exterior seemed at odds with his caring and compassionate attitude towards his students,

particularly the young males. Mitchell possessed an unusual depth of understanding and insight about the feelings and problems of young males.

Mitchell and Maria refused to participate in the interview unless they could participate together. Rather animated during the interview, Mitchell and Maria often interrupted each other, speaking at the same time, or echoing each other in the manner of a Greek chorus. Mitchell and Maria presented one of the most enjoyable and unusual interviews of this series, as they never hesitated to voice their ideas in an almost argumentative fashion, repeatedly sparring with each other. They often strayed away from the interview questions, presenting quite a challenge for me to keep the interview from derailing.

Overview of Participant Population

Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants for this study. Purposeful sampling refers to choosing specific individuals for inclusion in the sample, because these individuals best represent the topic, concept, or idea under study. Participants for this study were identified according to the following specific criteria:

1. Participants were practicing K-6 classroom educators in Midwestern City School District.

2. Participants were completing their first year of experience in the teaching profession following graduation from accredited colleges or universities.

3. Participants were professionally trained teachers who were teaching in single-grade classrooms.

4. Participants were willing and capable of participating in the study.

Names of potential participants were obtained from the director of the first-year teacher induction program, from participants, and from school principals. Out of 24 first-year teachers, 21 individuals met the criteria for the purposeful sample. After indicating their willingness to participate in the study, 4 teachers later declined due to personal time constraints. Seventeen usable interviews were obtained. Seven teachers wrote poems about their experiences as first-year teachers. All 17 participants signed informed consent documents prior to their interviews. The interviews were held at locations determined by the participants.

The population for the study included 15 females and 2 males. Fifteen participants described themselves as White and two described themselves as Multiracial. Participants ranged in age from 20 years of age to 49 years of age. Thirteen participants stated their age fell between 20 and 29 years; 2 participants reported their age in the range of 30 to 39 years; and 2 participants described themselves as falling in the 40 to 49-year-old group.

Participants represented all grade levels from Grades K-6. Eleven elementary school sites, of the 23 elementary schools found in Midwestern City School District, were represented in the study (see Figure 2). The total number of teachers in each school represented in this study fell between 17 and 45 teachers. Each school in the study included no less than one but no more than five new teachers.

Thirteen participants characterized their school populations as greater than 50% poverty, as indicated by the number of children receiving textbook assistance and free or reduced lunches. The other 4 participants described their school populations as low to middle class. None of the participants described his or her school as comprised of less than 300 children; 7 participants stated that their schools contained from 300-500

children. Eight participants described their school populations as consisting of 501-700 children, and 2 participants stated that their schools included 701-900 children. Thirteen participants listed their schools as having a K-6 configuration, 2 participants stated their schools had a Grade 1-6 configuration, and 2 schools included preschool as well as K-6. The number of students in participants' classes ranged from 14 to 29 children, with a mean number of 21 children.

Fifteen participants indicated education as their primary area of certification, and 2 participants listed education as a secondary area of certification. College and university backgrounds of the study participants included 7 individuals who attended more than one college during their university education, with the remaining 10 participants attending either a large public or a small private university. (See Table 1, for a summary of this demographic information in a table format.)

Five participants worked in at least one other career field prior to obtaining their teacher certification and entering the classroom. These fields included food service, medical, business or office environments, and childcare occupations. (Figure 2 represents the participants and their schools in a tree diagram format.)

Description of Midwestern City School District's Established Teacher Induction Program

First-year teacher interns, entering their first year in the classroom, participated in induction programs in Midwestern City School District, as required by the school district and the state of Indiana. Only teachers eligible to hold a valid teaching license participated; limited license teachers remained ineligible for participation in the program.

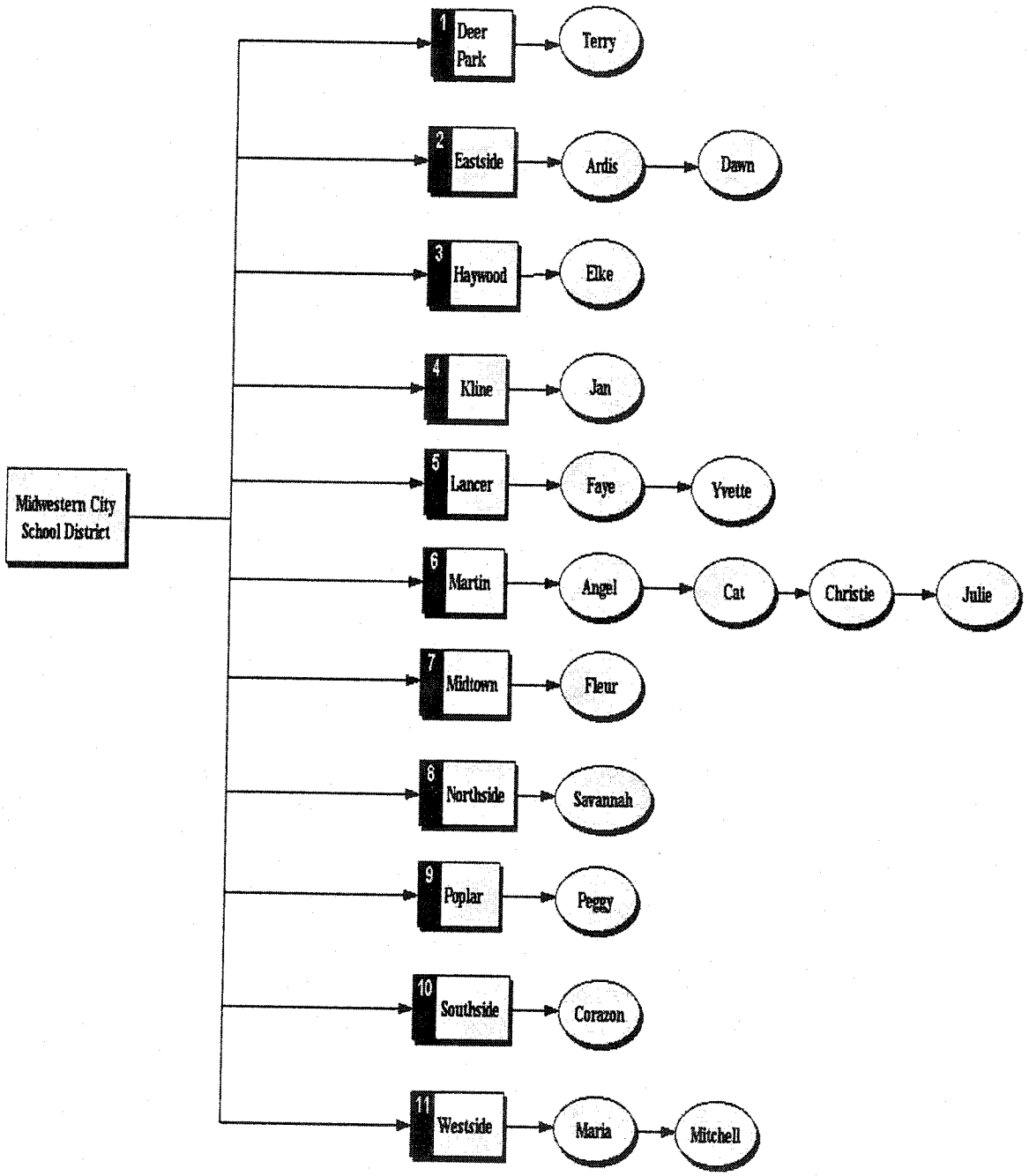

Figure 2. Participants classified by school.

An examination of the documents related to the induction program disclosed that the program consisted of three basic components: (a) orientation, (b) in-service sessions, and (c) mentoring.

Orientation

The orientation session occurred on a day in late August, lasting from 8:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m., and prior to the first teacher day, when all teachers in the district reported for work to start the new school year. All first-year teachers met in a large group for this orientation session, at a site within the community, although not a school site.

A review of the agenda for the day revealed many topics to be covered, including an overview of the district mission statement and introduction of key central office personnel. Other segments of the program covered human resources information about contract, payroll, absences, and benefits. Finally, the agenda listed other school concerns, such as curriculum, supplies, hours, parking, and security; and information on the Indiana beginning teacher internship program and Indiana standards.

Each session occupied a 30-to-60 minute block of time, with about 30 minutes devoted to information about the first-year teacher induction program itself. Different central office personnel took turns as moderators for the sessions, depending upon the topic under discussion. A 60-minute lunch hour provided time for the first-year teachers to meet and talk together in an informal setting.

In-Service Sessions

In-service sessions occurred throughout the school year, with the majority of them scheduled before December, according to the program documents. These sessions met

after the school day ended, from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. Topics addressed included policies and procedures, parent conferences, standardized testing, classroom management, diverse student populations, classroom assessment, technology, and ending the school year. The location of the sessions varied; sometimes, the first-year teachers met at school sites. At other times, they gathered at the central office building, or the computer training facility for the district, depending on the topic to be addressed. The first-year teacher participants stated that these in-service sessions usually focused upon a guest speaker or panel of guests.

Mentoring

Program documents further indicated that a mentor guided and assisted each first-year teacher intern. The mentor ideally taught at the same grade level, in the same building, and in close proximity to the first-year teacher. In actuality, this ideal arrangement could not always occur. Some first-year teachers worked with mentors in other school buildings, which were located miles away. Other first-year teachers might have slipped through the cracks, with no mentor assigned to them, particularly if they began their teaching duties after the start of the regular school year. Some first-year teachers struggled through their first year in the classroom without the benefits afforded by the presence of a caring, helpful mentor.

Indiana does not provide release from regular teaching duties for mentors. Thus, the mentor continued with his or her regular teaching duties, in addition to working with the beginning teacher intern. The mentors also attended meetings that helped prepare them to work with their assigned interns, although formal training was minimal at the time of this study. No minimum number of mentor-intern meetings was required.

Summary

The data included in this chapter came from the following sources: (a) my own observations; (b) the Indiana Department of Education website; (c) the *Recommended School Budget* for the school district under study; (d) the school directory for the district under study; (e) the Chamber of Commerce and the Visitors and Convention Bureau websites for the school community under study; (f) the interviews with the first-year teacher participants; and, (g) documents pertaining to the teacher induction program for the school district under study.

This chapter presented a description of the context of the study. Portrayals of (a) the community in which the study took place; (b) the school district; and (c) individual schools in the study formed the nucleus of the chapter. Figure 2 utilizes a tree diagram to illustrate the 11 Midwestern City School District elementary schools included in this study, followed by the names of first-year teacher participants for each school. School names are presented in boxes; the names of the teacher participants for each school are found in the ovals to the right of the boxes.

Included with each school description, the participants from that school were profiled. A composite overview of the participant population followed, in narrative format. (Table 1 contains the same information, expressed in a tabular format.) Finally, the chapter ended with a snapshot of the teacher induction program currently in place in the Midwestern City School District.

Table 1

Description of Full Sample of Study

	n (*n*=17)	%
Gender		
Male	2	11.8
Female	15	88.2
Race		
White	15	88.2
Biracial / Multiracial	2	11.8
Age		
20-29	13	76.4
30-39	2	11.8
40-49	2	11.8
Student SES		
0-50% Free/reduced lunch	4	23.5
51-100% Free/reduced lunch	13	76.4
Total School Student Population		
<300	0	0
300-500	7	41.2
501-700	8	47.1
701-900	2	11.8
Grade Configuration of School		
Pre-6	2	11.8
K-6	13	76.4
1-6	2	11.8
Current Teaching Assignment		
Kindergarten	1	5.9
1st	2	11.8
2nd	1	5.9
3rd	3	17.6
4th	2	11.8
5th	1	5.9
6th	6	35.2
other	1	5.9
Number of Students in Class		
1-20	8	47.1
21-29	9	52.9
Primary Certification Area		
Education	15	88.2
Other	2	11.8
Teaching as Second Career		
Yes	5	29.4
No	12	70.6
Type of College Attended		
Public	8	47.1
Private	5	29.4
Both	4	23.5

CHAPTER 5

DESCRIPTIONS OF MAJOR THEMES

I'm thinking you are a blind-folded person who's been spun around on the roof of a skyscraper, and you're told to walk. If you fall, you don't know how bad it's going to hurt and how long it's going to take to get back.
—Maria, a first-year teacher

Twenty-two themes were identified from the interview transcriptions, falling into five major categories: (a) Development of Self as Teacher; (b) Interpersonal Relationships; (c) Pre-Service Preparation; (d) Actions and Tasks Associated With Teaching; and (e) Induction into the Teaching Profession. In chapters 5 through 8, each of these themes is discussed in detail, as follows: chapter 5, Development of Self as Teacher; chapter 6, Interpersonal Relationships and Pre-Service Preparation; chapter 7, Actions and Tasks Associated With Teaching; chapter 8, Induction into the Teaching Profession.

Development of Self as Teacher

This category focused on characteristics specific to the development of a personal image of self as teacher. Within this category, eight different themes developed from the words of the interview participants. These themes cut across both the school boundaries and the individual interviews.

Themes in this category include: (a) Feelings; (b) Qualities; (c) Background mismatch with students; (d) Self image issues; (e) Passion/mission/ calling; (f) Idealism and unrealistic expectations; (g) Resilience; and (h) Reflective thinking. Each of these themes will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

Feelings

The first-year teacher participants in this study referred to many feelings that could be characteristic of the first year in the teaching profession. However, three words used by the participants to describe their feelings appeared more often than any others in the interview transcriptions. These words were: "overwhelmed," "excited," and "frustrated."

"Overwhelming," a word expressed by 9 participants, was used most often to describe first-year teaching. Elke said, "In a word, overwhelmed. Overwhelmed with just everything that you needed to learn that first year. It was amazing" (Vol. 3, pp. 1, 2).

These words were echoed by Faye, a teacher at Lancer Elementary School: "There was fear, and you were overwhelmed. There are so many responsibilities you are going through" (Vol. 5, p. 3). Ardis also described similar feelings: "Overwhelming is probably the biggest. The whole year has been completely overwhelming. A lot of uncertainties, and a lot of excitement too" (Vol. 2, p. 1).

While she also used the word "overwhelming," Corazon expressed a certain degree of optimism about teaching at Southside Elementary School.

> Everything is new and it is changing all the time. It is a big challenge, because it is your first time having your own classroom. You are going through everything, writing assessments, going through the curriculum, the discipline, lesson plans, for the first time, so there are a lot of aspects that are new, and it is

> overwhelming, but by the end of the year, I feel I am finally getting a handle on it. (Vol. 10, p. 1)

Christie also tempered her comments with optimism, elaborating on the positive aspects of her first year in the classroom at Martin Elementary School.

> First of all, it was very exciting. To be able to finally do what I've wanted to do, it was very exciting to do that. I would say that some days were overwhelming, very overwhelming, but it is thrilling too, to see the children grasp a new concept. It can be very frustrating when they are not grasping it and you have tried every angle to teach it, it can be very joyful to see the smiles and the happiness on the children's faces. It is very much a learning experience. I learn a lot through teaching them—I have learned a lot. (Vol. 6, p. 1)

Jan spoke about starting her experience with little time to prepare: "They interviewed me, gave me the job that day, and then I think I had the weekend, and we started school that next Wednesday. It was kind of complicated, overwhelming" (Vol. 4, p. 1). Other words used by participants to describe first-year teacher challenges included: "exciting," "frustrating," "disappointing," "chaotic," "lonely," "rewarding," "disorganized," "challenging," "intimidating," and "joyful."

During my interviews, I asked the participants to compare beginning teaching to "something," in essence, replicating Ganser's (1999a) work with metaphors for beginning teaching. The first-year teachers in my study compared beginning teaching to "being a tadpole," "sinking in quicksand," "whirling in a tornado," "becoming a parent," "riding a roller coaster," "being a one-legged, one-armed paperhanger," "spinning around blind-folded on the roof of a skyscraper and then being told to walk," and simply being "everything to the kids."

Participants also mentioned the multiple roles teachers occupy, such as coach, instructor, counselor, nurse, doctor, mother, warden, caregiver, psychologist, dad, and disciplinarian. These remarks emphasized the complex and many-faceted nature of the

teaching job, and served to underscore the highly emotional and also highly exhausting aspects of teaching.

Qualities

The first-year teacher participants in this study mentioned specific qualities that they believed had been developed in themselves as a result of this first year of teaching. The word "organized," mentioned by 6 of the 17 participants, appeared most often in the interviews.

First-year teacher participants in this study believed they had undergone a change during their first year, developing new skills and strengthening personal qualities. They described increased patience, better communication, and improved organizational abilities, as noticeably strengthened characteristics.

Julie spoke at length about the communication and organizational skills she developed during her first year in the classroom at Martin Elementary School.

> I think one of the keys to being successful is being organized. You have to be organized. I've learned how to communicate better with students. You know, yelling is going to get you nowhere, you have to be calm. And communication with parents; I totally believe in that too. I mean, I will send notes home everyday if I have to. (Vol. 6, p. 87)

Dawn advised, "Stay on top of the work. Plan ahead for what you're going to teach, in case the copy machine breaks down" (Vol. 2, p. 59). Christie also emphasized the need to stay organized:

> Get organized now! Because organization seems so petty, yet it plays a big role. When you are not organized, it changes your teaching style, because you're irritated that you can't find the one worksheet, and you thought you copied the spelling list on the back of the homework log, and when you passed it out it was gone, and now it puts your whole week behind. Organization is one of my biggest things I will work on next year, to get organized and stay organized. (Vol. 6, p. 80)

Corazon talked about the importance of being organized, using these words to describe her ideas:

> You need to be organized. That includes being able to plan ahead, and knowing where everything is at, having a general idea of what you are doing. I guess it's good for any job. If I were to teach the same grade next year, it would be much easier because now I've been able to set in my mind how I want to teach certain skills or set up the schedule of the day, and what fits well. (Vol. 10, p. 11)

Mitchell and Maria described their thoughts on finding their own teaching styles, during their first year at Westside Elementary School: "You've got to get mean, you've got to change your whole attitude sometimes, you've got to revert to the dictator. You can't waver on anything, especially the first 9 weeks" (Vol. 11, p. 18).

Angel spoke of the importance of collaborating with others, and displaying confidence: "In the beginning, you just have to go in there with a go get'em attitude; you have to re-evaluate and be realistic, and know that you are going to do it" (Vol. 6, p. 13).

While working on a poetry unit with her students, Jan created this short poem, which included her interpretation of "how to describe a teacher."

How to Describe a Teacher

Teacher
Helpful, sweet
Caring, explaining
Educator

Background Mismatch With Students

The teachers in this study experienced surprise and astonishment at the way students behaved, and the ideas with which some students came to school. Seven of the teachers commented on the vast differences between their own backgrounds and those of their students. These differences caused not only concern, but also caused bewilderment

among the participants, as they sought ways to successfully deal with some classroom issues. Fleur described this feeling of bewilderment, as she remarked,

> Sometimes I am just so stunned I don't even know what to think about the way these kids behave, because my kids don't act like that at home. I never acted that way, I would have got my butt beat, so I don't know how to react to those things. (Vol. 7, p. 16)

Cat referred to a television show about an "ideal" American family in her comments about her own upbringing, which she felt differed from the family lives of her Martin Elementary students. "I had like a Brady Bunch family growing up, so it's a lot different than what I experienced" (Vol. 6, p. 24).

Maria revealed not only her lack of familiarity with the backgrounds of her sixth-grade inner-city kids at Westside, but also a gap in her pre-service teacher training. "You're put in a situation you weren't really well trained for. It's a different background from what I grew up with, especially dealing with the inner-city kids. I came in totally thinking sixth-graders are sixth-graders" (Vol. 11, p. 1).

Yvette similarly described her lack of background for working with her first-grade students at Lancer Elementary. She said, "I never had this type of background, and it was kind of like a culture shock in the socio-economic difference" (Vol. 5, p. 2).

Christie related her lack of experience with the varied backgrounds of her students to her undergraduate preparation at the university level. Regardless of the quality of her coursework, Christie did not believe her university work could have prepared her for the issues she encountered. She stated, "I was not raised that way. So there is a real culture shock: the lives they come from, the backgrounds they come from. I don't think a college course could have prepared me for that" (Vol. 6, p. 76).

Jan compared her childhood to the childhood experiences of her current students. She also described the reactions of her family members to her "school stories."

> There were kids who had fights, but it was never at this level. The extreme hatred or anger. . . . I just think we knew when the teacher asked you to sit down, you just did it. No one got mad, or said, "Why?" It's just amazing how it has changed. I talk to my grandmas, and I tell them stories and they just can't believe it. Everyone has their bad moments, but I didn't expect. . . . It hasn't been like this all year, it's just a few isolated situations and times and days, but those are the ones that stick out in your mind, when people ask how your year has been. (Vol. 4, p. 22)

Self-Image Issues

First-year teachers in this study revealed doubts about their own self-images. These concerns not only emanated from their personal self-doubts, but also from remarks made by parents of students, or by other teachers. They questioned their effectiveness, worried about being evaluated by their principals, believed education as a profession lacks recognition and respect, and felt their age factored into their effectiveness and believability as a competent, confident professional.

Elke described her conversation with a Haywood Elementary School parent, in which the parent queried, "Are you old enough to be teaching my child?" Elke fell back upon her university credentials for her response, "Yes, you know I have my degree," rather than actually referring to her chronological age (Vol. 3, p. 12).

Jan talked about the perceptions held by others, that the mantle of teacher automatically conferred upon her a certain level of knowledge and wisdom. She said, "I think most people right off the bat think since I am older, I am a teacher, I automatically have this power. What do I do?" (Vol. 4, p. 11). However, Jan believed that her students

were more likely to confide in her, because she was closer in age to them than their parents were:

> I think the kids see that I am younger. They come to me more easily. Girls will come to me; but if they had an older teacher, they wouldn't come to her. They told me, since I am younger, it is easier to come to a younger person, especially a woman. I have 19 girls, so they are looking to me. I think since they know I am younger, they trust my opinion more than their mom or dad. (Vol. 4, p. 12)

Ardis commented on the blows to her self-esteem and her subsequent feelings of inadequacy sustained during her first year in the classroom at Eastside. Interestingly enough, Ardis hinted at one of the reasons new teachers leave the teaching profession.

> I don't feel like a real teacher after this year. I wanted them to see me as the qualified teacher that I am, but I don't think they respect that I'm trying to provide a stable environment. With the amount of disappointment I've had this year, it doesn't feel like I am valuable. I can see how if that continued year after year, I wouldn't want to do it. (Vol. 2, p. 26)

Fleur talked about her relationships with other teachers at Midtown Elementary. Her comments painted a picture of a school culture that appeared unwelcoming to new teachers.

> I don't feel comfortable with the teachers in my grade level, because when I talk to them, they sometimes make me feel like I am really stupid. I do what I'm supposed to do, and I don't rock the boat, and if I'm asked to do something, I produce it. (Vol. 7, pp. 4, 38)

Yvette spoke about her feelings regarding the lack of respect accorded to the teaching profession by individuals not involved with education.

> I think teaching is a profession that is a little bit underrated. I think teachers need to be recognized, get a little more recognition, because it's something you just do. As much as some people may not see it as high a profession as others, but I definitely do. I think it is one of the best things you can do if you have that talent in you. (Vol. 5, p. 15)

Cat's poem, "A Test of Personal Strength," included thoughts and feelings that run the gamut, from determination, to excitement, self-doubt, pride, and finally reflection

upon her first year in the classroom. Her poem described the phases of new teacher development, explained by Veenman (1984), Moir (1990), and Tetzlaff and Wagstaff (1999). These lines from her poem illustrated her struggles with self-image issues during her first year of classroom teaching, and her thoughtful determination as she came to terms with herself as a teacher.

A Test of Personal Strength

Everyone wondered why I wanted to teach and "waste my intelligence"
But I was determined to care, help and prove my strength.
I was warned not to tackle too much and dive in over my head
But I wanted a challenge in the city so I listened to myself instead.
I had two overwhelming days to clean, organize, and prepare
As well as meet all of my students who brought with them hundreds of relatives that care.
Throughout the year, many events were filled with joy and frustration.
Some days I felt weak, like I couldn't accomplish anything,
When I assigned detention after detention, praying for the bell to ring.
After a rough day that felt like a battle against the entire classroom
The principal would abandon me and parents would call with voices filled with doom.
The difficult days left me feeling emotionally drained
Making me want to sleep for hours on end to take away the pain.
However, most days I feel like I am productive and I am building my own strength.
I beam with pride when the students master skills after practicing for great lengths.
I love laughing, talking, and learning with all of the kids
And when I receive a compliment I blush and inside I shout, "I did it!"
Through it all, I feel fortunate to have the energy to give the students my all through this career.
I'm determined to grow stronger and accomplish even more during my second year.

Passion/Mission/Calling

Eight of the study participants described teaching as a passion, mission, calling, or innate ability. They expressed beliefs that teachers are "born to teach." While university pre-service programs may provide background knowledge and skill development, these participants believed that true teachers are born, not made. Peggy stated, "People are born to teach. I think it's something within you that you

have. I don't think it can be learned" (Vol. 9, p. 22). Corazon echoed these beliefs in her interview.

> I think you have to be cut out for it if you want to stick with it and do well. I think you have to have the heart for teaching children and working with children. There is so much work involved, even outside of the school hours, that I know if I weren't passionate about it, there is no way I would even want to do it. (Vol. 10, p. 12)

Angel saw teaching as a calling, a mission designed for service to children and to God. Interestingly enough, Angel felt that the passion to teach would sustain an individual at times when the role of teacher became difficult.

> I think just the drive and ambition to beat the challenges and the bad feelings when they come, and you can't let it beat you, because there are kids out there who need us. We might be the only people that love these kids. I know God led me here for a reason. (Vol. 6, p. 20)

Despite his frequent descriptions of irritating and unruly student behavior, Mitchell also described teaching as a desire and a passion to interact with children on a daily basis. He did not believe that a university education alone could create a teacher.

> You have to be the person that has the flexibility, the organization, the passion, that has the love and the desire, because you don't teach for the paycheck or because you want the summers off. Four years of college aren't going to make you a teacher. (Vol. 11, p. 37)

Idealism and Unrealistic Expectations

Fifteen of the study participants expressed a "missionary ideal," prior to actually entering the teaching profession. This idealistic vision featured themselves as teachers who triumphantly conquered difficulties, saving the world. They described a shattering of these unrealistic expectations, upon being confronted with the hard work and day-to-day disappointments of the classroom.

Peggy spoke of her pre-conceived ideas of what her teaching experience might be like:

> You get these built up ideas when you're in college, and you don't see the whole day. You are excited until hour two of the first day, and then I think a lot of people are overwhelmed, because they have no idea what it's going to be like. (Vol. 9, p. 1)

Terry commented on the images he previously harbored when contemplating the ranks of teachers, which he had now joined.

> I don't think people know what they are getting into when they get into teaching. I grew up in school thinking, they teach from 8 to 3 and they get to go home. All they do is talk about learning all day, and then they go home. (Vol. 1 p. 15)

Elke remarked upon the idealistic attitude of first-year teachers as life-changers.

> It's going to be hard work, but I'm going to change kids' lives. Then I realized, I'm going to change them, but it's going to be a lot harder, and maybe a little bit less than I ever thought it would be. And things are difficult. (Vol. 3, p. 12)

Fleur described her feelings of disillusionment, when transitioning from her job of teacher's aide to classroom teacher. "Some days I don't love it. There are days when I think, 'I can't believe I ever wanted to do this.' Some days I dread it, I don't want to be here" (Vol. 7, p. 6).

Referring during her interview to her university coursework, Corazon revealed her feelings of not really understanding what the job of teacher would be like. She described the difference between "head knowledge" and "emotional preparation" for the job.

> There is so much more to the job than what you learn. When you take the classes, it's mostly methods, and it's idealistic, and you may have occasional problems, but if you do it right, it will come out. When you are actually teaching, there is so much more to it than having the right method and following the right lesson plan format. (Vol. 10, p. 9)

Christie stated,

> I am still in the shock phase. It was nothing like the way I would imagine my first teaching job would be like. I felt there were so many ideals you learn in college about how it's going to be, and you get this picture in your mind, and it's nothing like that at all. You don't enjoy it every minute. I know you don't enjoy any job every minute, but there were quite a few minutes I didn't enjoy this year. (Vol. 6, p. 76)

Maria provided this description of her first week of school at Westside Elementary, and the loss of her initial rosy visions of teaching: "I had high expectations of what I would be doing and what would be going on, and the first week it was like boom! It blows up in your face and everything is out the window" (Vol. 11, p. 34).

Resilience

The interviews yielded up many kernels of wisdom and insight from the first-year teacher participants, who demonstrated a remarkable capacity for resilience, the ability to "bounce back" after negative experiences. During their interviews, 13 of the participants included comments that referred to renewed determination, future changes they intended to make, new techniques to be tried, changed attitudes, and surprising resourcefulness. Like prizefighters, these individuals seemed ready to get up off the floor, dust themselves off, and try again.

Peggy stated, "I guess just the hope, or knowing the next day it can't get much worse, just thinking . . . today I'll try this and see if this works better" (Vol. 9, p. 24). She also described her efforts to become organized and be proactive in her preparations: "I mapped out the year of what I thought were important skills, by looking through the curriculum, and my own worksheets and stuff, so I kind of set my own framework for what I was teaching in my classroom" (Vol. 9, p. 10).

Ardis described her approach for dealing with the school culture and for meeting people at Eastside Elementary:

> I have made a huge point of going in and talking to teachers that I have never gotten a chance to, or in meetings, sitting by people that I don't know . . . if I hadn't been brave enough to do that. . . . I heard a few people talking about thinking I was shy, and I know I'm not, so I decided to go show them! No one can deny that I'm flexible. (Vol. 2, p. 14)

Cat told of techniques she used in order to deal with the frustrations and challenges she encountered in her classroom. She stated,

> I usually need a 5-minute vent session, and then just try to relax for the next day. And usually, when it's a fresh day, I don't carry things on from day to day. I don't really hold it against any particular person so I try to start fresh every day. But yet again, when you tell me that I can't [do something] then I'm determined I need to do it. (Vol. 6, p. 22)

Dawn described her efforts to find things out on her own, highlighting her abilities as a "self-starter": "I think I was on my own to find ways to what worked with my kids. I had to seek [help] whenever I had a question" (Vol. 2, p. 44). Maria elaborated on her efforts to motivate herself to return to her Westside Elementary School classroom after a particularly trying day.

> You know, every morning I wake up, and I think, "Ok, it's a new day, I'm going to be positive, I'm going to go in there and this is going to happen, this is how I'm going to approach things today. It'll work better this time." And you walk in, and then boom! A couple of kids do something, and then: so much for positive thinking. (Vol. 11, p. 34)

Faye discussed the importance of positive self-talk, and finding ways to encourage oneself when things go less well than might be expected or hoped for: "You have to step back and give yourself a pep talk, or hopefully find someone else to give you the pep talk, to let you know that you are going to be fine. Give yourself a break" (Vol. 5, p. 32).

Reflective Thinking

Eleven participants in this study offered reflections upon their own actions and work. These beginners provided informative suggestions for those soon to enter the realm of educators.

Ardis advised new teachers to be aggressive in their search for answers and assistance. "Go out and meet people, ask questions. Demand [that] people tell you what you need to know" (Vol. 2, p. 30). Cat stated, "You make adjustments, and you learn to accept things, and make greatness out of the things you have" (Vol. 6, p. 49). Savannah counseled new teachers to put on a face of courage and determination. "Act confident, even though you may feel differently; look confident, even if you don't feel it" (Vol. 8, p. 23).

Terry described a wisdom and ability to analyze a situation, far beyond what might be expected from a 20-something teacher who just stepped into the classroom a few months ago.

> When things blow up, I just think that's when you have to be good at reflecting on what happened. Ask yourself, "Is it something I did as a teacher today? Was I not planning well enough not to foresee something that could have gone wrong, or was it something with the students?" We have to be patient with the kids and patient with our professional work. (Vol. 1, p. 21)

In reflecting upon what makes the difference between successful and unsuccessful first-year teachers, Faye contributed these perceptive thoughts: "I think the people who stay in the profession are the people who really look inside themselves and make the changes they need to make and adjust" (Vol. 5, p. 31).

Despite her concerns about which school she would be assigned to for the next school year, Corazon described how she was thinking and planning in advance, based on

her first-year teacher experiences. She commented, "I feel that I am finally getting a handle on it and everything is coming together. I have established what I would want to do differently already for next year, and I have a feel for what I want to be as a teacher, now that I've gone through it a year" (Vol. 10, p. 1).

Christie viewed herself as a role model for her students, holding herself accountable to quite high ideals. "I often think of myself as a student, and what I thought of my teachers, and I try to be that to my students" (Vol. 6, p. 81). In contrast, Julie presented a more practical and pragmatic piece of advice for teachers new to the profession.

> Be happy with what you are doing. Not every day is going to be peaches and cream. There's some days I go home and I'm like, "I just wish I had a cubicle job," you know, where I didn't have to talk with anyone. That's dealing with the public. Just deal with it. (Vol. 6, p. 115)

Dawn discussed at length her recommendations for new teachers entering the profession, based on her thoughtful reflections about her first-year experiences and about the isolated nature of teaching. She remarked, "I think you have to be willing to try new things until you find something that works. You have to be willing to ask questions and seek out information. You have to be willing to fit" (Vol. 2, p. 57). Despite her many frustrations and difficulties with classroom discipline issues, Maria also displayed the capacity to reflect upon her experiences. She offered these words of wisdom for educators, tinged with the self-doubts that are sometimes voiced by beginning and experienced teachers alike.

> We have to have not so high expectations that the child is not going to be able to reach them, but you have to have high enough expectations that they realize that we expect something from them, and that they are not going to get a free ride. Then you have to hold them to that. I've got so many different thoughts that I

want to do next year to try and change things. If that doesn't work, than I don't know. (Vol. 11, p. 31)

The following piece of literary work, created by Savannah, poignantly captured the roller coaster ride of joy and frustration experienced by first-year teachers. However, readers of this poem will note that the verse ended with the "bounce back" attitude expressed by 11 of the 17 participants in this study.

Those Days

I remember when I made my decision
Ten years ago now
It was one of those days
A clear moment in time
Always smiling,
Very positive,
Achieving my goals,
It was one of those days.

Ten years later,
First year of teaching,
Those days seem fewer now
Smiles disappearing,
Negativity coming out,
Achievement becomes frustration.

Amongst the worst of days
A little something occurs
The day miraculously changes
To one of those days
An email from an old student,
Recognition from a colleague
Children performing their talents
One innocent pure moment in time
That's all it takes

And the day changes
To one of those days.

Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of the data category entitled, "Development of Self as Teacher." Within this category, eight different themes were discussed: (a) Feelings; (b) Qualities; (c) Background mismatch with students; (d) Self-image issues; (e) Passion/mission/calling; (f) Idealism and unrealistic expectations; (g) Resilience; and (h) Reflective thinking.

Regarding the theme of "Feelings," nine participants, or 53%, mentioned feeling "overwhelmed," four participants, or 23.5%, described feelings of "excitement," and three participants, or 17.6%, mentioned "frustration." Additionally, the participants used other words to describe their feelings during their first year in the classroom. These feelings of being overwhelmed and frustrated were recounted by Roehrig et al. in their 2002 study of challenges common to first-year teachers.

First-year teacher participants also spoke of the qualities they felt were vital to success in the classroom. The participants described the characteristics they felt were enhanced or developed by their work in the classroom, despite the challenges inherent in the job. Six participants, or 35.2%, mentioned the word "organized." Other participants also underscored the importance of good communication with students and with parents, flexibility, openness to new ideas, and firmness.

Seven participants, or 41.2%, related their surprise at the difference between their own backgrounds and those of their students. Most of the first-year teacher participants described difficulties understanding and identifying with the problems brought to school by their students. In her study of female first-year teachers,

Cattani (2002) underscored the importance of preparing teachers, both male and female, to teach diverse student populations, particularly in urban areas. In my study, both male and female first-year teachers commented on the differences between their own childhood experiences and those of their students.

First-year teacher participants in this study also expressed concerns related to their own images of themselves as teachers. The issues they worried about the most included: age as a factor, addressed by five participants, or 29.4%; questions about their own effectiveness as a teacher, discussed by three participants (17.6%); concerns about their performance evaluations, mentioned by three participants (17.6%); and, lack of recognition and respect for the teaching profession, also mentioned by three participants (17.6%). According to the interviews, these issues of self-image significantly impacted about 17% to about 30% of the individuals.

Nearly half (47%) of the study participants believed that they had been specifically called to the teaching profession, or that teaching was a mission in their lives. They referred to having a passion to work with students, and to spending many hours, both in and out of the classroom, either planning for or thinking about teaching their students.

A high percentage (88.2%) of the first-year teacher participants described their early idealism and unrealistic expectations about schools, about students, and about teaching in general. Veenman (1984) referred to these early idealistic views as "missionary ideals," in which first-year teachers viewed themselves as "saving the world." During the *disillusionment* phase of the first-year teacher cycle of development, "reality shock" set in, as first-year teachers realized the collapse of

these unrealistic expectations in the wake of fatigue and stress (Moir, 1990). However, 13 of the 17 participants in my study, or 76.4%, also expressed resilience, in the form of optimism, changed attitudes, and ideas for the future. Finally, the first-year teacher participants were asked what suggestions they could provide for recent graduates of teacher preparation programs, who would soon join the ranks of educators. Eleven of the 17 first-year teacher participants (64.7%) came up with suggestions, based upon their experiences during their first year in the classroom. The results of the interviews with first-year teachers for the category entitled "Development of Self as Teacher" are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Development of Self as Teacher

Themes	***n*** **(*n*=17)**	**%**
Feelings		
Overwhelmed	9	52.9
Excited	4	23.5
Frustrated	3	17.6
Qualities		
Organized	6	35.2
Background Mismatch with Students	7	41.2
Self-Image Issues		
Perceive age is a factor	5	29.4
Question effectiveness	3	17.6
Worried about evaluations	3	17.6
Lack of professional recognition	3	17.6
Passion/Mission/Calling	8	47.1
Idealism	15	88.2
Resilience	3	17.6
Reflective Thinking	11	64.7

CHAPTER 6

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND PRE-SERVICE PREPARATION

They talk about rewards and gratification in teaching school, and there is a share of it, but they don't tell you it's like joining a monastery or going to hell or sleepwalking or being afraid, afraid as you were when you were small.
—Esme Codell, *Educating Esme*

In this chapter, two categories of data, derived from the first-year teacher interviews, are discussed. These categories are entitled "Interpersonal Relationships" and "Pre-Service Preparation."

The themes delineated for each of the two categories are discussed, with examples of the participants' words included. Finally, a summary reviews the key points for each of the two categories and the concomitant themes.

Interpersonal Relationships

The interview participants credited support from family members, whether teachers or non-teachers, as being crucial to surviving the stressful first year in the classroom. In addition, many of the interview remarks focused on challenges related to interactions with students, as well as with members of their families. Participants also revealed interesting observations about the cultures of their respective schools, and their encounters with faculty and staff.

Within this category, four separate themes developed: (a) Outside support, from faith, family, and friends; (b) Relationships with students; (c) Relationships with parents of students; and (d) School culture. Each of these themes is discussed in this chapter.

Outside Support From Faith, Family, and Friends

Eleven participants remarked on the necessity of receiving support from their family, friends, and faith during this first difficult year of teaching. Several participants came from families in which other individuals were also members of the teaching profession. They spoke of ways in which the common experience of teaching provided them with a background canvas upon which to position their own experiences. Dawn remarked, "My family has always had teachers in it, so I grew up with teachers" (Vol. 2, p. 56).

Ardis relied on her spouse for support; she talked about the necessity of having a person to listen to and to sympathize with her. She said,

> My husband is great. If I hadn't had someone at home that would allow me to talk about it and just get it off my chest and then go out to eat or something, change the subject, then I would never have made it. I would have had a breakdown long before now. (Vol. 2, p. 25)

Angel used these words to comment on the importance of outside support for first-year teachers.

> I think someone who has a support system at home, in their family, whether it be their parents or a husband or wife, a support system at their church, is important for me. I think that all helps, that people are confident in you, in who you are, and know your passion and desire, and love for these students. (Vol. 6, p. 13)

Christie described the difficulty of combining parenthood with her career, speaking of her struggle to meet both family and job responsibilities.

> I became a mother and a teacher in the same year, so I had a 3-month-old when I started teaching. It was real difficult, I felt like I was sacrificing her many times for 22 other children. There were weekends I put everything down, and I spent time with my husband and my baby, and then I felt so much better about it. Sometimes you just have to put the paperwork aside, and give them the time. (Vol. 6, p. 82)

The first-year teacher participants in this study clearly encountered challenges in trying to balance time spent at school or on schoolwork, with time spent with family or friends. However, the interview participants affirmed their belief that some form of support system was needed in order to survive the first year in the classroom.

Relationships With Students

Children are the very heart of the teaching profession. Schools and teachers would have no need to exist, were there no children to educate. All of the first-year teachers interviewed for this study talked about their relationships and interactions with their students; 11 of them spoke extensively about these interactions.

Palmer (1993) states, "The goal of a knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds" (p. 8). These first-year teachers showed remarkable intuitive abilities when it came to discerning students' problems and concerns. The remarks quoted in this section demonstrate the commitment of these individuals, not only to educate their students, but also to minister to their social and emotional needs as well.

Terry showed a great deal of sensitivity to his students and their needs. Throughout my interview with him, he continuously demonstrated an attitude of genuine care and concern for his students.

> They have so many more problems, they have to know you care if they are going to learn. You have to build relationships, otherwise they won't listen. When they want to talk, to have someone to talk to, when you talk to them, it means showing them grace when they need it, if they messed up, to forgive and forget and start over. (Vol. 1, p. 18)

Cat described her efforts to personalize her interactions with her students. She spoke of the important role of educators in teaching students more than just textbook knowledge, and the importance of helping to mold them as individuals.

> I think a successful beginning teacher would know they have related to their students, gotten to know them, and taught them new skills; not just from the textbook, but skills they can actually learn in real life. I feel completely ridiculous, but I know the songs they are talking about, so if I have to bring that in so they understand it, that's what I have to do. I rarely sit, so I walk around the room most of the time. I'll ask questions about what they are doing, or I'll notice that they're upset and I'll ask, 'What happened this weekend?' or even, 'What time did you go to sleep last night? Why are you so tired today?' And just simple 30-second questions that aren't wasting time. But through those little questions, you can really get to know them. (Vol. 6, p. 50)

Through the following words, Christie indicated her concern about the home lives of her students, and her desire to remedy social problems that abound in this urban school district: "They are worried about having electricity or running water, and I've done all I am supposed to do and there is no change. I would love to put all of my students right up in a middle-class home" (Vol. 6, p. 62). Addressing social issues appeared repeatedly in nearly all the participant interviews. In addition to their concern, the participants expressed frustration and anger at the lack of effectiveness of the social service agencies in being able to alleviate the problems.

Mitchell presented an interesting depth of insight about male students in particular. Here he described his efforts to adjust the environment to "cater to boys."

> I would let the kids work in my room after school, instead of sending them down to detention. I could get my work done, and I'd have them do stuff that wasn't so much busy work, because I'd get to talk to them. They're great kids when

> you get to talk. We are not catering to boys. I have this problem where I don't have room for certain things that I can get my boys involved with to do what we call 'heavy work,' because guys need that at this stage of the game. Kids are like a wet bar of soap; I think sometimes with discipline, you can squeeze too hard and you'll lose the kids. They say, 'Mr. Mitchell, I don't like you.' I say, 'That's okay, I still like you.' (Vol. 11, pp. 31, 32)

These comments made by the first-year teacher participants demonstrated their commitment to their students and the importance of forming caring relationships with children. A foundation of positive relationships with students lies beneath the building blocks of instruction, which support student learning.

Christie's poem about her first-year teacher experience focused upon her developing relationships with her students. She described the emotional aspects of teaching, and the satisfaction resulting from these continuously evolving connections between teacher and learner.

First Days of Teaching

Walking in the room for the very first time,
Grasping at the realization that it was finally mine
Staring at the shelves with books of knowledge all around
How was I going to get it into my students' hearts and minds?

Emotions swam within me
Excitement, peace and joy
The walls stared at me curiously
With such excitement they began to hum.

My creative side was calling within me
But it would have to wait
Lesson plans were calling me
Oh the excitement that flowed through me
My heart began to ache.

Looking back to that day
It seems so long ago.
Laughter draws me back
My students are tackling assignments with a grin
Mrs. K, Mrs. K, Mrs. K.
That word seems to never end.

I swoop from group to group
Answering more important questions
The day seems overwhelming and yet I am so content.
Smiles rise all around me, they finally grasped that concept.

I look around and see the world before me.
They come in all sizes, shapes, colors and backgrounds
Their eyes pleading with mine, please don't let us down
We long to make a difference just show us how.

The world seems to stop around me
I've lost all sense of time
I watch their little faces
Staring back at mine.
I look above and thank Him
Yes, it has been worth every moment
And every single dime.

Relationships With Parents of Students

For these first-year teachers, the parents of their students proved to be a unique, surprising, and sometimes frightening aspect of teaching. Nine participants spoke about interactions with parents of their students, in which they felt humiliated, embarrassed, and demeaned. Elke described one interaction with a parent: "I had no idea that someone would be mad at me about something and not approach me in a positive way, and come in yelling first, and making me feel terrible" (Vol. 3, p. 2).

Cat suggested one possible reason for negative parent interactions with and reactions to educators. She stated, "A lot of parents were very mistrusting of teachers. Other parents had seen teachers in the past who were extremely harsh, and they were afraid I was out to get their student and that I wanted them to fail" (Vol. 6, p. 29).

Julie described the dehumanization she felt when she first encountered a verbally abusive parent, and the stress this situation brought to her life.

> People don't realize there is a very high stress level. You know, when you get your first phone call, a parent calling you every name in the book. You want to cry, that eats you up, it hurts. You are still a human being. (Vol. 6, p. 113)

School Culture

Fourteen interview participants discussed the effects of school culture on their ability to succeed as teachers. Interactions with other teachers within the school building, and with their immediate teaching colleagues, played an important role in new teacher comfort and competence. These interactions, whether negative or positive, affected their abilities to feel successful in the social context as well as in the classroom. Peggy mentioned her dismay at the culture she encountered at her school.

> I'd always hoped that all the teachers at a school worked together and had one goal in mind, so the divisions within the school surprised me. One teacher wanted to take on my issues and use it against the principal, so I think she had her own agenda for being interested in what was going on in my class. (Vol. 9, p. 26)

Cat expressed her surprise at the tense atmosphere in her school, precipitated by a negative relationship between the teachers and the school principal. "I had never, ever seen a school where the teachers and the principal didn't get along, so that was a really rude awakening to me, a real separation between the teachers and the principal" (Vol. 6, p. 49).

Christie told of her decision to stay away from other faculty members in order to avoid having their negativity "rub off" on her. What a welcome for a new teacher! The ideas expressed by Christie affirmed the "culture of isolation" that seems so pervasive in the teaching profession, a culture in which adults rarely see or interact with other professionals throughout the school day.

> I tried to stay to myself, because the staff of my school is very negative and I don't want to be negative. It was a "crush them" atmosphere. They are no good. I did not want that to rub off on me, so it wasn't like I could go to just anybody. I felt I was walking in an alley in the dark on some days. (Vol. 6, p. 73)

Savannah spoke of feeling that she was competing with other teachers in her school.

> There is a big competition in the classes and who has the better class and that sort of thing at the beginning of the year, because all of us were new teachers in the sixth grade. So it was an uphill feeling, there is a lot of competition, and I don't like competition. Just the lack of support from within the school building for beginning teachers. (Vol. 8, p. 3)

Angel wished for a bit of forewarning about school politics and "lounge talk," prior to her entrance into the teaching profession. She commented upon her naiveté about the complex interrelationships that exist in school societies.

> I think a little more heads up on the things that happen in the lounge at lunchtime. I know that teachers need to vent, but I also think it's very good to be warned about who you talk about, where you talk, who's around. Those are the kinds of things I didn't really think about until I observed it happening to other people. I trusted everybody I talked to. (Vol. 6, p. 12)

Mitchell and Maria voiced interesting and colorful comparisons to the differences between the "old" school building, in which they began the school year, and the "new" school building, into which they moved during the school year.

> We lost the cockroaches, and we lost a lot more coming into the new building. You walk into this building, and you don't feel like you are in a winning school, or a school that has a family sense to it. We are so worried about how the building looks, and the kids have picked this up. (Vol. 11, p. 15)

Maria expressed her doubts about the school culture in a verse she wrote about her experiences as a first-year teacher. The poem gave an impression of a fragile self-image, marred by the discouraging atmosphere of a negative school culture. However, Maria ended her poem on a note of hopefulness for a better future in teaching, as she looked forward to her second year in the classroom.

The First Year

The first year of teaching
Is hard to explain
It's not what I was reaching
When I signed my name.

Up high on the rooftop
With eyes closed tight
Spinning, unable to stop
I mustn't give up the flight.

Which way to go
Fragile stepping each day
To the left, the right, I do not know
I must be careful with every which way.

Too close to the edge
My feet so unstable
Carefully I must tredge
If I want to be able.

Ups, downs
I feel little's been raised
Too many frowns
Not enough praise.

A year of learning
Some good, some bad
I am so yearning
For next year to make me glad.

Mitchell suggested several components that are needed in order to be successful as a first-year teacher. Interestingly, his remarks focused on relationships with others, rather than on texts or learning materials.

> If you have the support, if you have a decent class size, if you have the support of the parents, if you have the support of the teachers, you can't go wrong. And you know what? I don't think the kids can go wrong either. (Vol. 11, p. 36)

These remarks by the first-year teacher participants highlighted the interplay of different groups within the school setting, and how these relationships affected

students and teachers. Interpersonal relationships, whether they involved students, parents of students, colleagues, or the families of the first-year teachers, played a key role in success in the classroom. Additionally, the support and cooperation of each of these groups remained essential to reaching the goal of improved student learning.

Pre-Service Preparation for Teaching

The first-year teacher participants seemed willing to provide input about their preparation for the teaching profession. Their remarks revolved around three basic themes within this category: (a) Pre-service preparation at the college or university; (b) Search for a teaching position; and (c) Lack of background regarding children's social issues.

These first-year teachers expressed their own ideas about ways in which teachers might be better prepared for the surprises and stresses of the first year in the classroom, as they transition from university student to classroom teacher. The three themes are discussed in detail in the following sections.

Pre-Service Preparation at the College or University

Participants were asked to talk about their college or university preparation for entrance to the teaching profession. All 17 participants spoke openly about the positive aspects of their pre-service preparation, as well as those aspects that they would like to see improved. Participants in general felt that they received an adequate to excellent background in methods classes, and that they came to the teaching profession with appropriate "head knowledge." Faye spoke of her respect for her college professors: "I

had some very good professors that have absolutely made a difference in my entire life, that I really value as role models and as educators" (Vol. 5, p. 17).

Terry related his desire for college or university preparation that included more opportunities to spend time in the classroom prior to student teaching: "It should probably center around real experiences in the classroom. People say you don't learn anything until you get out in the classroom" (Vol. 1, p. 20). Peggy concurred,

> I think the teacher education programs really need to change. The people from the education program really need to be working in the schools. People that start in the schools right away are going to see a lot more. I think the weeding out process needs to start sooner. You are not prepared for not being able to go to the bathroom for 5 or 6 hours. (Vol. 9, p. 26)

Cat articulated similar views on this topic, but also mentioned "an early way out" for those not suited to teaching. Her words expressed a more positive slant on the reasons behind early placement of pre-service teachers in classroom settings.

> I think it's extremely important to get them out to schools in a variety of grades and settings, early on in their schooling. You discover you don't like it early on, then you can move on and try something else. (Vol. 6, p. 32)

Participants in this study often addressed their need to enter the teaching profession with a wider variety of techniques for dealing with classroom management, and with problematic student behaviors. This topic is discussed in greater detail in chapter 7. However, it is discussed briefly here in the context of pre-service preparation, since the topic occupied a significant portion of the interviews when speaking of pre-service teacher preparation.

Cat observed, "I received a fairly good preparation, but the biggest shock was classroom management and discipline" (Vol. 6, p. 47). Ardis concurred, "Classroom

management, and even understanding the classroom dismissal procedures, that was all overwhelming. That's the part you didn't really get trained for in college" (Vol. 2, p. 8).

Classroom management and discipline themes occurred often in the interview with Mitchell and Maria. They found negative student behavior to be a serious detriment to successful classroom instruction, and a tremendous stress point in their first year as classroom teachers. Maria said,

> In college, they don't teach you how to deal with the disrespect, they don't teach you how to work when the parents don't work with you, when the administrators don't work with you. It's been the most stressful year of my life. (Vol. 11, p. 2)

Mitchell agreed with her.

> At college, I felt that it was always geared towards the type of schools I grew up in, and they talked about inner-city this or that, but they didn't go into depth of the problems you could have. It's not just the inner-city schools that could have those problems, it can be your rural schools, your poor income schools, and they don't gear it toward any of that. (Vol. 11, p. 23)

Perhaps this discussion really highlighted a desire for more in-depth study and preparation at the undergraduate level, prior to entering the urban school setting. Problems related to the urban classroom seemed to present stumbling blocks for the first-year teachers in this study.

Search for a Teaching Position

Five participants talked about their frustrations with finding a teaching position, once they graduated and made a foray into the educational workforce. Yvette stated, "It's like you are fighting tooth and nail just to get a teaching job. Where's everybody begging for teachers?" (Vol. 5, p. 16).

Corazon's words demonstrated her agreement with Yvette, yet indicated a willingness to work hard and persevere in order to land a teaching job.

> I learned you have to be really aggressive to find a job. Calling principals, going to schools, I was taking resumes to schools all over the place, and that's actually how I ended up getting this job the day before school. You have to work really hard to find a job. (Vol. 10, p. 15)

Angel provided the following words of advice to first-year teachers who seek a teaching job: "Get all your information out right away, all your resumes and applications, go straight to the principals at the schools. Get your name out there, sub while in college if you can" (Vol. 6, p. 16).

Lack of Background Regarding Children's Social Issues

Sixteen of the 17 participants referred specifically to the social issues brought to school by children, for which they felt ill prepared upon entering the teaching force. They talked of their surprise, dismay, and inability to address these issues. The participants also spoke of the difficulty of getting down to the business of education, when compelling outside issues intruded into the classroom. Yvette commented,

> You see what these children have to deal with. Because the medications that half of them are on, the diagnosis of each one, the families they come from, the situations that they are living in, everything is adding up to what their little bodies can do in schools. We were not well prepared to deal with children in poverty, children with these types of behavior problems. (Vol. 5, p. 43)

Terry agreed, "They just bring in different garbage in their minds other than school, and it is nothing they can control. They bring in problems from home" (Vol. 1, p. 17). Peggy felt concern for her students' lack of the basic needs of life, saying, "It's everything else that goes along with it, all the outside things, the lack of involvement of parents in the school, in their child's education, lack of concern for their child as a person, their cleanliness, their eating habits" (Vol. 9, p. 7). Savannah commented, "I've had [another] child bring his sister's sexual toys to school" (Vol. 8, p. 20).

Cat and Christie found ways to address these problems within the context of the classroom, allowing learning to continue. Cat observed, "A lot of them have parents who are in jail, and parents are divorced. You've actually saved time if you stop, talk about it for 5 minutes, and then move on, rather than trying to mask over everything" (Vol. 6, p. 24). Christie also spoke of her efforts to assist her students:

> I never realized how bad some of their home lives are and school is a refuge for them; just the home life, dealing with their personal lives is a big challenge. One little girl in my class is 10 years old, and she is responsible for her five other siblings when she goes home. Sometimes, I have found that just letting them talk about it, they can do their schoolwork. (Vol. 6, p. 61)

A poem written by Angel described her first year as a "roller coaster ride." However, her poem was the only one of the first-year teacher poems that included a commentary on the social issues affecting children's ability and desire to learn in the structured setting of the elementary school.

Roller Coaster Ride

The ups and downs of a roller coaster ride
Are the feelings I've had this year as I hide
In a second grade classroom filled to the top
With emotions that often make me pop.

From high highs to low lows
I've dealt with the blows
As I work all my might
To put out the fights.

It is a challenge to do
All that the state asks me to
When each student comes from a home
Where he is allowed to aimlessly roam.

The neighborhoods where they live
Seem to always be ready to give
A twist on each life
That is often filled with strife.

In spite of all this,
I know that I will miss
The children's smiling faces,
As they work at their own paces.

Every morning I pray,
"God, help me find the way
To let these special kids know
That I truly care for them so."

While the social issues did not just go away, the first-year teacher participants in this study found ways to address those issues, and to be supportive to their students who lived in difficult circumstances. Additional pre-service preparation for dealing with these social issues might help to alleviate the initial stress and surprise.

Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of the data categories entitled "Interpersonal Relationships" and "Pre-Service Preparation." Within these two categories, seven different themes were discussed. In the category entitled, "Interpersonal Relationships," the following four themes developed from the words of the first-year teachers: (a) Outside support, from faith, family, and friends; (b) Relationships with students; (c) Relationships with parents of students; and (d) School culture.

Regarding the theme entitled "Outside support," seven of the first-year teacher participants, or 41.2% of them, mentioned finding help from supportive family members. Two of the participants, or 11.8%, described the help they received from friends. Three of the participants, or 17.6 %, discussed finding support in their faith.

Through discussing with others the difficulties encountered in their classroom interactions, the first-year teachers gained a renewed perspective on these difficulties. In addition, two of the participants made specific references to finding other Christian individuals at their schools who supported them, and relying on prayer to get them through the difficult times.

Eleven of the participants, or nearly 65% of them, remarked upon their efforts to develop relationships with their students. They stated that successful teachers needed to get to know their students, and should incorporate the interests and experiences of their students into classroom instruction when possible.

Nine of the 17 participants, or about 53%, described interactions with parents of their students. They focused primarily on negative parent interactions, or on feelings of frustration with parents who remained uninvolved with their child and his or her schooling.

Finally, 14 of the 17 first-year teacher participants, or 82.4%, commented on the school culture or the school politics at their schools. Some of them found challenges in just trying to fit in at their school; others described difficulties in finding out vital information, or locating instructional resources. Words used when speaking about school culture included "lonely," "scared," intimidated," and "discouraged." These comments would seem to indicate a school culture referred to by Johnson and Kardos (2002) as a "veteran-oriented culture," in which the processes and procedures seemed designed to cater to the needs of experienced, rather than first-year, teachers. In their case studies of first-year teachers, Roehrig et

al. (2002) included 2 categories addressing school culture and teacher colleagues, out of the 22 categories developed in their study.

In the category entitled "Pre-Service Preparation," the following three themes unfolded from the first-year teacher interviews: (a) Pre-service preparation at the college or university; (b) Search for a teaching position; and (c) Lack of background regarding children's social issues.

All 17 of the first-year teacher participants in this study described their pre-service preparation experiences at the college or university. Most of them felt prepared to instruct their students, with appropriate background knowledge of pedagogy.

However, all of them stated their belief that universities should be doing more to prepare potential teachers for entering the profession. The participants specifically expressed a need to get out into classrooms as soon as possible. They also desired more training in classroom management and dealing with student discipline, and better grounding in diverse student needs, particularly those related to urban environments. Darling-Hammond (2003) presented similar recommendations in her work regarding teacher preparation. Cattani (2002) also wrote about the great need for first-year teachers who are well prepared in dealing with urban schools and the special needs of urban students.

Five participants in the study spoke of the difficulties they encountered in searching for a teaching job. They recommended that those individuals seeking a teaching job should be proactive in their approach, visiting principals in person and remaining open to unusual, surprising, or last-minute offers of teaching positions.

Additionally, they stated that prior experience in working with children served as an excellent background qualification for teaching.

Finally, 94% of the first-year teacher participants commented on their concerns about social issues, and how these issues affected children's success in the classroom. They stated that some children came to school ill prepared to learn, and lacking in the basic needs of food, clothing, and care. Others came to school having had little sleep or tired out from working in the home or caring for younger siblings.

Several of the first-year teacher participants described techniques they used in order to cope when social issues threatened to impact student learning. These techniques included group discussions, individual conversations with the students, and referring the student to a school social worker or counselor. In their case studies of first-year teachers, Roehrig at al. (2002) included 4 categories that deal with social issues out of the 22 categories they derived from their study.

The results for the categories entitled "Interpersonal Relationships" and "Pre-Service Preparation" are represented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3

Interpersonal Relationships

Themes	***n*** **(*n*=17)**	**%**
Outside Support		
Faith	3	17.6
Family	7	41.2
Friends	2	11.8
Students/ Kids	11	64.7
Parents of Students	9	52.9
School Culture	14	82.4

Table 4

Pre-Service Preparation

Themes	***n*** **(*n*=17)**	**%**
College or University	17	100.0
Job Search	5	29.4
Children's Social Issues	16	94.1

CHAPTER 7

ACTIONS AND TASKS ASSOCIATED WITH TEACHING

You have to build relationships; otherwise, they won't listen.
—Terry, a first-year teacher

The category discussed in this chapter, entitled "Actions and Tasks Associated with Teaching," includes three themes: (a) Instruction; (b) Classroom management, discipline, and managing student behavior; and (c) Time issues/ demands. Each of these three themes includes subthemes, which are detailed within each of the separate theme discussions in this chapter.

The title "teacher" implies that one spends his or her day instructing students. However, the previous sections of this document suggest that the job of teacher actually encompasses many and varied responsibilities, in addition to instruction.

When they finally got around to discussing their instructional duties, the study participants spoke of their need for resources and teaching materials, and their struggles to work within the curriculum framework. They also expounded upon the difficulties of maintaining a positive classroom atmosphere, the time devoted daily to student conduct issues, and their efforts to balance personal and career commitments.

Instruction

First-year teacher participants in this study mentioned a variety of different instructional tasks with which they dealt each day in the classroom. Throughout the course of the interview, 10 of the 17 interview participants referred to a lack of instructional resources.

Christie's words described a class to which she was assigned when a teacher abruptly resigned several weeks into the school year. Christie related a dismaying description of her first encounter with her newly assigned classroom.

> I was supposed to teach class the very next day. It was a sight you would not believe. The desks had no books. I went to arrange them and I sort of pulled these desks to the other side of the room, and I just looked. There were no books, no paper, no pencils, nothing in these desks. He did not have a grade book for me, he did not have a lesson plan book for me. I did not know where these kids were. There was not anything on the bulletin boards. There was nothing in this classroom. (Vol. 6, p. 68)

Julie also entered her classroom as a first-year teacher after the school year had already begun. She described a situation similar to that described by Christie; her words conveyed similar feelings of frustration and disbelief.

> I did not have clues or plans for me left, where the teacher previous to me left off. I had nothing. I had a piece of paper with the line leader for the next four weeks written on it. No plan book, no grade book. (Vol. 6, pp. 93, 94)

Dawn related the problems she encountered in finding materials to set up learning centers in her classroom. Her words also touched on the issue of trying to purchase learning resources with a limited salary.

> With less material than what the other teachers have, I felt very inadequate because of the amount of stuff they had. And they had all these neat things going on, and I have this to work with, on a half-day teacher's salary. No money to go out and buy all the things. (Vol. 2, p. 42)

Savannah related an interesting twist to her experiences in seeking out learning resources for her students. Upon discovering that the previous teacher had sent many of the textbooks home with the students, Savannah began to search for other classroom materials to use. In the classroom she found copies of books that she had used as a student in the sixth grade. Here are her words:

> We had no Math Steps, we had no Daybooks, we had no Write Source. There were a lot of old books left in the class, so I thought I was supposed to be teaching out of those. I didn't have teacher resources, and these books are old, like those social studies books. I thought, "No way. I had those when I was in grade school." (Vol. 8, p. 6)

Mitchell described his frustrations in seeking appropriate material to use for instructing his sixth-graders.

> We ran into where we didn't have teacher's guides, I have math books that I don't have the teacher's manual for, we don't have the supplies, and you spend hours just trying to find something you can use to teach kids. We don't have the resources we need now. I'd kill for an old-fashioned math book. (Vol. 11, pp. 7, 8)

Nine individuals talked about difficulties using the curriculum guide, although they also mentioned their appreciation of having the guides. For some first-year teachers, the constrictive nature of the guides posed a real challenge to creativity. For others, the guides provided a welcome structural framework to guide and support instruction. However, the nine individuals referring to the guides also mentioned a desire for additional training in the correct ways to use them.

Corazon described her frustrations in using the guides, and her wish for a more detailed introduction to their organization and use. She stated:

> I felt like jumping into the different curriculum without much of an introduction to what it was or even what was in there. It took a while before I figured it out, it would have been nice to sit down and look through it; I think just an overview would be great. (Vol. 10, p. 3)

Regarding the guides, Fleur's comments echoed those of Corazon.

> Working with the curriculum guides, all this information was new to me, and I couldn't correlate the math book with the curriculum. It might have been nice to have some background on the curriculum guide. (Vol. 7, p. 2)

Eight teacher participants addressed the problems encountered with the wide range of ability levels in their classrooms, and struggling to adapt learning resources to meet the needs of their students. Christie described the challenges she encountered in trying to create lessons that would address the learning styles, levels, and needs of the students in her class. She said,

> The biggest challenge I have right now is how to challenge the high achievers, how to teach the at-risk kids, how to get everybody in between on their levels. Out of 22 students, I have about eight different levels in every grade level. If I take the time to challenge the high achievers, these children are lost, they don't understand one thing about it. (Vol. 6, p. 60)

Jan concurred with these challenges, using these words to explain her situation:

> I think the problem for first-year teachers is, you have so many different levels in one classroom, and I have some in special ed, some that are extremely bright, it just goes through every level. I struggle with that, they go back and forth from our special ed teacher, and coming back to class. (Vol. 4, p. 6)

Lack of background knowledge, planning for instruction, and differentiating instruction presented a notable challenge for new teachers, as expressed in the words of Cat, Julie, and Fleur. Cat stated, "Another challenge would have to be finding different ways to present the same material, like five different ways" (Vol. 6, p. 28). Fleur told of a concern with special-needs students: "The other big thing is children in my classroom who have emotionally impaired problems" (Vol. 7, p. 9). Julie referred to her lack of experience with special needs students, saying, "Another big area is special education. I had never been to a case conference, I had never seen an IEP" (Vol. 6, p. 108).

The ability to create long-term lesson plans (6 participants), and also too much paperwork (7 participants), appeared as themes in the interviews as well. The overwhelming burden of paperwork associated with teaching represents a different, yet very real, aspect of managing a busy classroom. Teacher participants in this study described the piles of paperwork for which they were responsible, and the amount of time required to complete this work. Jan spoke at length about the challenges she found in managing the paperwork, which formed an integral part of the bureaucracy of schools. Her words about dealing with paperwork follow:

> I felt so bombarded by every single thing. Paperwork was the huge thing. I didn't have a clue about half the paperwork you have to deal with. I felt there were a lot of little things I needed to do, but just not knowing. . . . I wasn't familiar with a lot of people in the school, didn't know the departments, downtown, or at the building. Having that portfolio on top of it, I have tons of stuff to do. (Vol. 4, p. 14)

Terry spoke of his inability to create lesson plans in advance, given the amount of work involved in teaching and his need to prioritize tasks. "I would say maybe some small ideas, like planning over a week in advance, which I don't seem able to do right now. There is just too much other important stuff to take care of" (Vol. 1, p. 12). Terry also stated that "just getting the paperwork side of it down, as far as planning or grading papers" was one of his biggest challenges as a first-year teacher.

Julie described her intense focus on paperwork during student conferences, which led to her loss of the thread of discussion among the participants in the conference. She said,

> They get so involved and you documenting and everything for every time you go, that I was sometimes so worried about getting those papers done and taking notes while I was there, rather than really focusing on what was going on. I had never been to a case conference before, I had never seen an IEP. I had no clue; that's where the paperwork comes in. (Vol. 6, p. 108)

Dawn also talked about coming into a situation in which she was required to complete paperwork with which she was unfamiliar. A lack of communication seemed to exacerbate her problem in this situation. She said, "I'm not always told exactly what needs to be written down, or when it needs to be returned. It's kind of frustrating, because most of my books are not written down" (Vol. 2, p. 41).

It was interesting to note that while the first-year teacher participants in this study believed that paperwork and planning were challenges for them, these two aspects of teaching played a subordinate role to actually instructing students. However, they certainly impacted the ability of the first-year teachers to provide the types of learning opportunities that lead to improved student achievement.

Classroom Management, Discipline, and Managing Student Behavior

The challenges associated with classroom management were touched upon briefly in chapter 6 of this document. However, that brief discussion focused upon how well first-year teachers felt they were prepared to address inappropriate student behavior in the classroom. This chapter deals with ways in which classroom management impacted classroom instruction.

Of all the aspects of teaching described as challenges by the 17 study participants, dealing with student misbehavior stood out as a frequent and common theme. All 17 participants spoke of their surprise, frustration, dismay, even fear at the behaviors they encountered in their students. (Although some teachers continue to view classroom management and disciplining students as separate from instruction, these activities actually cannot be easily separated from teaching and learning activities.)

Violent student behaviors affected life in classrooms, according to the participants interviewed in this study. Peggy related, "I had an EH [emotionally handicapped] kid who was very violent. How can I teach the other 23 kids when he is throwing chairs across the room and yelling and screaming and punching people?" (Vol. 9, p. 3). Savannah concurred,

> I was very surprised at how harsh these kids talk to each other and to the teacher. I was too soft at the beginning of the year, and you don't get that second chance to make the first impression. (Vol. 8, p. 20)

Jan detailed the violent and angry behavior displayed by young girls in her classroom.

> These girls' tempers were horrible! She gets so upset, so mad, she could probably haul off and hit, and not think, she is just so angry. This could happen in the hallway, and it's just not good, because of the open concept, and kids who are going back from the bathroom, and kids are kids in the hallway. She and another girl, their tempers. . . . I've never seen tempers this bad ever in my life. This one girl's mom said the only reason her daughter is not giving out licks at school is she knows what's going to happen to her at home. (Vol. 4, p. 8)

Savannah also referred briefly to an incident involving a weapon on the bus. She expressed her surprise at having "strange incidents" happen. Here are her words:

> I had some really strange incidents I never dreamed of ever encountering. I know, I've seen on TV, and we talked about in methods classes that guns have been more involved in school. I actually did have a kid bring a BB gun on the bus. (Vol. 8, pp. 19, 20)

Establishing a classroom climate conducive to learning surfaced as a topic in the conversations of the teachers. Fleur remarked, "I think to be a successful teacher, you need to make sure that you have good management going on in the classroom" (Vol. 7, p. 38). Jan's words described the need for establishing the right classroom climate and routine in order to be able to conduct learning activities. She observed,

> Discipline was the biggest part, as long as you have a hold on that, you can get through your day. How you set up your classroom, how you pass out papers, transitions, how you handle difficult situations, discipline, someone shouting out, hitting, pinching, yelling. . . . I don't think anything can prepare you totally. That's how I feel half the time, it's discipline, and learning the other 20% of the time. (Vol. 4, p. 20)

Christie spoke of the challenges she encountered in changing the "mood" of her students, coming in as she did after the school year had already begun: "I had that teacher before me. He set the mood for that class, and I had to change the mood for the students" (Vol. 6, p. 70). Julie also emphasized the need for a structured classroom, a setting that promotes student learning. She talked about a similar "turn around," stating,

> It was a very unstructured classroom when I came into it, and it has turned around a lot. I think it's very important to have a routine. You really need a routine, and classroom management that is good; that's how your day flows. (Vol. 6, pp. 83, 85)

Jan delineated ways in which she attempted to make her classroom appealing to her students and to engage them in learning.

> Your atmosphere, what you have up in your room. . . . We have one wall, floor to ceiling bulletin boards, and it's a divider or partition, and that is all bulletin boards except for a nice-sized dry erase board. That is bright, and I think if you appeal to kids that way, that is huge; it's all about wanting the kids to be there, and doing every possible small thing to have them want to be there. (Vol. 4, p. 21)

Christie spoke of having to repress laughter at a humorous remark by a student, for fear of losing control of the class.

> You could not laugh about something that was cute in that class when you first started because you lost complete control of your class. I had a whole classroom full of major discipline problems. I had to establish myself. I did gain control of them, I had to be very, very stern. (Vol. 6, pp. 70, 72)

Mitchell and Maria spent much of their time in our interview talking about student behavior and their struggles to gain control of the class. Maria stated, "It

amazes me that you still have to tell them how to walk in the hall or how to do this after almost their entire school year. You still have to tell them the rules" (Vol. 11, p. 14). Mitchell offered these comments, providing sage advice for those unfamiliar with the classroom setting.

> You have to stop, take care of the discipline, and you make a big mistake if you let things slide. You gotta pick your battles, but it seems like some of the kids that misbehave, somebody is always willing to take their place. They could be absent. (Vol. 11, p. 1)

Dawn commented on how to handle a conflict with a student, using these words, "I think if you're disagreeing with a child, you should never let them win. A lot of the kids in the upper grades like to talk back, and they should know that's not happening" (Vol. 2, p. 59).

Angel talked about her encounters with inappropriate student behaviors, adding remarks about her lack of support by some parents. "Behavior is definitely one of the biggest problems," she said. "I think the interactions with the parents, they think their child is perfect and they have never seen them do wrong" (Vol. 6, p. 3).

Corazon described her difficulties in finding ways to appropriately discipline students, when faced with a variety of student behavior issues within one classroom. She said,

> Working with this group of kids is a great challenge, and finding different innovative ways that would work with the individual students. Behavior plans, some of them ended up needing medication. . .finding different ways that really worked with them individually, because they are all different. A couple of them have a notebook that goes to and from school with a smiley face/frown system. It is noted every day how they are doing. We will have a follow up meeting. I have two for whom a daily behavior note goes home: good morning, bad afternoon. (Vol. 10, pp. 1, 2)

Christie provided details of similar incidents in which disciplinary consequences for one student failed to serve as consequences for another student.

> Finding the right discipline for the particular student. I have a student that likes to go to the Apple Room, so sending her to the Apple Room is not going to solve the problem. But Apple Room may work very well for someone else. (Vol. 6, p. 61)

Negative and disruptive student attitudes affected the ability of a teacher to assert discipline in the classroom, and to focus the class on the important business of learning. Faye remarked,

> The one thing I don't understand is the lack of motivation. Procrastination I can understand, but not to do anything at all, I will never be able to understand that. How to motivate a student who doesn't really want to learn, who's only here because they have to be here. That's very difficult. (Vol. 5, p. 4)

Jan told about the on-going problems she encountered with several female students with very strong personalities. These young girls frequently clashed in the classroom, as well as in other parts of the school building and on the playground. Regarding their unconstructive attitudes, Jan stated,

> They are so nitpicky, if someone invades their space, they hate it when people are in their space. They just don't understand that the way you approach a situation, the tone you carry with what you say, is going to determine the outcome, or however that next person is going to react to you. (Vol. 4, pp. 7, 8)

Angel described the "roller coaster" feeling of dealing with student attitudes and behaviors in her classroom. She said,

> I want my students to know that I love them. That has even been a challenge this year with some of the students and how they have reacted and responded to different things. It has really been a roller coaster because there are ups and downs of everything. (Vol. 6, p. 2)

Time Issues/Demands

Thirteen of the 17 interview participants spoke of time management issues and concerns, particularly as related to finding time for their families. They spoke of the difficulty of balancing many different demands on their time, and of the time-intensive nature of teaching. Terry used a half-joking tone to describe this challenge.

> I have some friends who are also first-year teachers, and we just joke about how we are never off the clock. It seems, you know, we talk about our friends who have jobs in the business world, and when they leave at 5:00 they are done for the day. But when we go home, it's like we never get to clock out. We are always doing something at home. (Vol. 1, p. 14)

Corazon's words agreed with Terry's thoughts on this subject. "When you're not even working you're thinking about it, your mind is always running, 'How could I change this, how could I deal with that?' Even if you are not actually sitting down and doing any work" (Vol. 10, p. 19). Elke talked about the after-school hours she spent during her first year, stating, "I was at school forever my first year; when do you leave it and say, 'I've got to go home now?'" (Vol. 3, p. 11).

The clash of job responsibilities with personal life became evident in the interviews as well. The first-year teacher participants struggled to remain faithful to their job responsibilities, yet devote time to their families and personal lives. Yvette's words expressed the thoughts of many new teachers, as she said, "There is not enough time in our day, trying to do all the things that are expected. Where do you leave the job? Where do you start your personal life?" (Vol. 5, pp. 5, 14).

However, Angel recommended that first-year teachers remain realistic about the time requirements of the job. She said, "Be willing to spend more time at school. Don't

compare yourself to people who come there right at 8 o'clock and leave right at 3:30; I'm never even near to being able to leave" (Vol. 6, p. 17).

Faye remarked on the new roles of young adulthood, which run parallel to the new job duties of first-year teachers.

> I've had to learn how to put some things down to keep my own sanity, to have a life. I'm trying to plan a wedding. My fiancé teaches. We come home and we're just tired. It's really difficult to balance all those things. (Vol. 5, p. 6)

However, Fleur looked at things from a different perspective. Fleur entered teaching as a second career, so her responsibilities encompassed already-established patterns of life.

> People have a life. All people want to have some kind of life other than their position. I have a family at home, and so that limits me, because I can't stay at the building all night, nor do I want to. I want to see my kids. I have tons of things that I bring home all the time. There's not enough time to teach and grade and do all the extra reading programs and whatever else they ask you to do. "Run, run, as fast as you can, you can't catch me!" That's how I feel. (Vol. 7, pp. 3, 24)

Another individual speaking from the viewpoint of a "second career" teacher, Maria observed,

> They made it sound like it was going to be a wonderful, wonderful profession, and you're going to love it, and it's all about kids. They don't tell you about all of the meetings; the first 9 weeks, I was having three and four meetings a week. At night, I would go until 4 or 4:30, and then try to do planning, and I'd get home at 6 or 6:30 at night, and have to take care of two little children under the age of 3, and I became this wicked mother. (Vol. 11, p. 24)

As a new mother, Christie felt the sting of caring for the children of others, sometimes at the expense of her own family.

> How you switched gears back into being a wife and mother, and putting teacher aside, and then on the weekend switching gears back into teaching; it seems that some days you want to shout for joy and some days you want to cry. (Vol. 6, p. 64)

Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of the data category entitled "Actions and Tasks Associated with Teaching." Within this category, three different themes were discussed: (a) Instruction; (b) Classroom management, discipline, and managing student behavior; and (c) Time issues/demands.

Regarding the theme of "Instruction," 10 first-year teacher participants, or 59%, described lack of resources as a challenge during their first year in the classroom. These resources could have been monetary, material, or in the form of human assistance.

Nine first-year teacher participants, or about 53%, spoke of the difficulties they encountered in trying to implement curriculum. These difficulties ranged from lack of experience with using the curriculum guides, to not even knowing that a guide existed.

Eight of the participants, or 47%, discussed feeling unprepared to deal with the differences in student abilities found within one classroom. Working with special needs students presented a particularly challenging instructional situation. Differentiating instructional materials to meet the needs of gifted students also caused consternation among the first-year teachers in this study.

Additionally, seven of the participants, or 41%, commented on their surprise at the amount of paperwork required of teachers, and their lack of time to complete it. This paperwork took the form of reports, report cards, student assignments, committee work, and a variety of procedural forms, which constitute part and parcel of the bureaucracy under which schools often operate.

Finally, planning for instruction presented concerns and challenges for six of the participants, or 35%, in this study. They attributed these concerns to lack of time to get ahead in planning, lack of materials, being disorganized, or starting a teaching career in the middle of the school year.

Classroom management concerns encompassed four different sub-themes. These sub-themes included student discipline, classroom climate, student attributes and attitudes, and violent students. When asked to describe their three biggest challenges during their first year in the classroom, concerns with classroom management were cited by 100% of the study participants.

All of the participants regarded student discipline situations as particularly challenging. During our interviews, at least three of the participants spent much of the interview time describing their difficulties with students.

Classroom climate, mentioned by six, or 35% of the participants, included problems encountered by first-year teachers who assumed their teaching jobs after the school year had already begun. These difficulties involved lack of materials to prepare bulletin boards or classroom decorations, crowded conditions, or beliefs that things were generally chaotic.

Five, or 29%, of the first-year teachers in this study mentioned unproductive student attributes and attitudes as sources of difficulty. They described students who displayed anger, hostility, harshness, lack of motivation, and lack of self-control as real concerns.

At least two of the teacher participants detailed student interactions and conflicts that disrupted instruction. These verbal or physical scuffles sometimes

brought to a halt the learning activities of all the students in the classroom, until the conflict was resolved, or the students were removed from the room. Two of the participants mentioned violent students, who fought, threw chairs, or displayed aggression towards adults and students alike. Participants also expressed frustration at the lack of personnel available to assist with either calming or consequencing these students.

The final theme in the category entitled "Actions and Tasks Associated with Teaching," addressed the monumental amounts of time needed to accomplish the tasks of teaching. First-year teacher participants remarked on the difficulties they encountered with "taking the work home." They described spending hours after school preparing lesson plans or correcting papers, photocopying assignments, creating bulletin boards, or attending meetings.

In addition, the participants struggled to forget about school once they managed to return home. They talked about constantly thinking about school or their students, regardless of where they were or what they were doing. Thirteen of the 17 participants, or 76% of them, talked about the time demands of school, and their concomitant difficulties in reconciling those school demands with family demands. At least two of the participants remarked upon the hardships of taking home positive attitudes towards their own children, after devoting so much time to their students at school.

In their study on first-year teachers, Roehrig et al. (2002) listed more than 500 different challenges encountered by first-year teachers. Of this huge number, they described more than 200 challenges dealing with classroom management issues

alone. Roehrig et al. classified these difficulties into categories dealing with classroom discipline, student misbehavior, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, communicating with students, school-based demands on time, planning lessons and school days, and personal life issues. All of the concerns expressed by the first-year teacher participants in my study could also be found in the lists generated by Roehrig et al. in their research.

The results of the interviews with first-year teachers, for the category entitled "Actions and Tasks Associated with Teaching," are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Actions and Tasks Associated With Teaching

Themes	***n*** **(*n*=17)**	**%**
Instruction		
Lack of resources	10	58.8
Curriculum	9	52.9
Differing student abilities	8	47.1
Planning	6	35.2
Too much paperwork	7	41.2
Classroom management, discipline, and managing student behavior		
Discipline	17	100.0
Classroom climate	6	35.2
Student attributes and attitudes	5	29.4
Violent students	2	11.8
Time issues/ demands	13	76.4

CHAPTER 8

INDUCTION INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

> *The traditional assembly-line metaphor for schooling does not work. Kids are not on conveyor belts, with teachers hanging knowledge on them as they pass by. Schools do not 'deliver instructional services,' pumping up intellectual tires and delivering pedagogical pizza. Children—blessedly—are more complicated and thus more interesting than that.*
>
> —Theodore Sizer, *Horace's Hope*

In this chapter, information gained from the first-year teacher interviews for the category, "Induction into the Teaching Profession," is discussed. Three main themes were derived for this category: (a) Programs; (b) Informal support by colleagues; and (c) Administrator and corporation support. The themes delineated for this category will be discussed, with examples of the participants' words included.

In addition, this chapter includes a description of the "ideal" teacher induction program. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the interviews.

Interview questions about the first-year teacher induction program in Midwestern City School District focused the attention of the participants on three specific aspects of their induction experience, as stated in the preceding paragraph. Not all the first-year teachers were afforded opportunities to participate in the induction program; some were not even assigned mentors, or offered orientation

sessions. Teachers who were recruited and hired after the formal start of the school year lost the opportunity to participate fully in first-year teacher induction.

All the participants spoke of their desires to visit the classrooms of other teachers and to observe them in action. Also, they voiced a wish to network with other teachers, and to discuss and share their ideas, experiences, and concerns with other first-year teachers.

Program

The interview participants spoke of various facets of the induction program throughout the course of the interviews. They discussed orientation, meetings, mentors, and colleagues. All 17 participants, or 100% of them, talked about meetings for first-year teachers; not all participants received invitations to attend the meetings. Ten of the participants in this study mentioned attending an orientation session. Nine participants expressed a desire to become involved in networking, small groups, or building level meetings.

When asked to describe the types of meetings held for first-year teachers in this school district, Terry observed,

> They are supposed to be meetings designed to help us. We talk about things we've already had at college. It's kind of repetitive. We just talk about things that go on in the classroom, whether it's classroom management. . . . We have one coming up that is going to be on parent conferences. Just the realities of teaching. I don't think they are all that effective, just because most of the stuff we should already have a good grasp on. People end up talking and it's just them talking the whole time and everybody else just listening. It's not because they are trying to hog the meeting, but they are the ones that want to talk. And that's fine, because everyone else is just content to listen. (Vol. 1, pp. 4, 5, 8)

Peggy described an orientation meeting she attended.

> They had one meeting the day before school started and it seemed like it was about insurance and calling in to Sub Finder. I think that was basically it. Maybe we had some kind of training, like science training, but never where it was just new teachers. (Vol. 9, pp. 5, 9)

Elke concurred, "We had a one-day meeting of all new teachers at every level, but they were talking about insurance things and everything else under the sun" (Vol. 3, p. 6). Faye echoed the thoughts of Peggy and Elke about first-year teacher meetings: "We do have meetings. A lot of stuff was redundant. The beginning one was just general information for those who might not be aware of how to do the procedures in the corporation" (Vol. 5, p. 26).

Savannah expressed the need for a positive start to the school year, perhaps by means of a get-together for first-year teachers. She related her viewpoint on these meetings.

> I think that's very important, to get all the beginning teachers there together, and to keep them together throughout the year. There are a lot of questions about the beginning teacher course within our school, and with the other teachers at their schools, because we weren't sure at first when we were supposed to go, where we were supposed to go. We had a very hard time contacting the person in charge. (Vol. 8, p. 13)

Because they started their new jobs after the official start of the school year, some new teachers were not afforded the opportunity to participate in orientation meetings. Julie apparently fell into this category. She stated, "I believe there are meetings and an orientation that happens, but I was never [there]. I think that begins at the beginning of the school year" (Vol. 6, p. 102).

Ardis offered her viewpoint on how a program for "late arrivers" might look. She observed, "It would be great for the teachers that start late like I did. It would be great if

somebody was in charge of making sure that they get involved; it would be a huge difference" (Vol. 2, p. 35).

In addition, Cat believed young teachers should be consulted, in order to compile ideas for topics, which could form the basis for the first-year teacher meetings. Cat expressed her ideas about the topics she would like to see covered in meetings for first-year teachers. Here are her thoughts:

> I think you should have [a meeting] on holding conferences, and a variety of types of conferences. I think they should give you ideas of how to be creative with [open house] and not just how to get by. And also one on different types of assessments. (Vol. 6, p. 36)

Other first-year teachers remarked about their "orphan status," often feeling left out of the loop and uninformed of learning sessions that could have been of great value to these beginners. Ardis lamented,

> I feel like we kind of slipped through the cracks, because the last meeting was cancelled and they sent a fax to everyone, that my fellow teacher and I didn't get one, and I ran emails and called and they still don't seem to know why we didn't get a fax. It's really frustrating. I was looking forward to the last one, because it was talking about wrapping up your year and how to go on to the next year. It was cancelled. (Vol. 2, p. 15)

Dawn told this sad tale:

> No one told me they had [meetings] until January. We had one on technology. When we got there, half the time they didn't know we were coming. The last time we went for the end of the year wrap-up, we had to wait probably 35 minutes before anyone let us know it was cancelled because they didn't know we were coming in the first place. We never received a fax either. (Vol. 2, p. 51)

Although fortunate enough to receive advance notice of planned meetings for new teachers, Savannah described a woefully inadequate training session she attended:

> Although we sat in a room of computers [at one meeting], we were not allowed to turn them on and check them out for ourselves right then and there. Now I tried to do this last week, and I tried to go back, and I couldn't do it; I needed to

> go back right then and there and practice it, like we watched [the instructor] do it. (Vol. 8, pp. 14, 15)

Savannah spoke at great length during our interview, about her experiences with new teacher programs in New Zealand, where she received some of her teacher training before moving to the United States. She described a very supportive, highly organized and interactive program, based upon frequent, intense training sessions, networking with other teachers, team teaching, and planning. Savannah contrasted this New Zealand program, which was described at length in the *Pacific Rim* study (Moskowitz & Stephens,1997), with the inadequate program in which she participated in the Midwestern City School District. The complete interview transcription remains available for interested readers.

Mentors

All 17 study participants, or 100% of them, articulated their views of mentors. Thirteen of them mentioned being assigned a mentor. Twelve of these 13 participants taught in the same school as their mentors. One participant's mentor taught in a school building on the other side of town from her school; the participant viewed her mentor as "inaccessible." Four first-year teacher participants lacked the assistance of a formal mentor.

Terry, Elke, Faye, and Corazon found their mentors to be helpful and supportive. Terry reported,

> I have a mentor who is also the same grade level that I teach. She's just there to answer my questions, to help me out with my planning. I think she probably goes above and beyond what she needs to do. She is just there for general advice, what a mentor would do to help me out. Other grade level teachers are helpful too. (Vol. 1, p. 3)

Elke concurred, "I actually got to choose my mentor at my school. She had no special training except that she had been teaching for 20 years by the time she was my mentor" (Vol. 3, p. 4). Faye told of a positive relationship with her mentor teacher:

> [My mentor] allowed me to come to her when I needed to. She was very open to when I needed help, and I needed guidance and direction. A lot of times it was just an ear to listen to and to bounce ideas and situations off of. (Vol. 5, p. 23)

Corazon described her interactions with her mentor:

> Other than having a mentor, I had nothing. My mentor is the other first grade teacher. She is really helpful. I would go to her if I had any questions, or ask in the office, or ask another teacher. It is reassuring knowing that there is someone who you can go to if you have a problem or if you are just not sure of what to do or something. After school some days, we would talk about our day. (Vol. 10, p. 4)

Other first-year teacher participants portrayed less positive mentor experiences. Ardis referred to her lack of mentor assistance, "My mentor didn't even know my first name at Christmas. I never really saw her. It's been such a frustrating year, and then to find out I could have had help" (Vol. 2, p. 3). Cat also found her relationship with her mentor to be somewhat lacking. She said, "I didn't feel anything negative from her. It was just an absence of her presence. She's never, ever observed me" (Vol. 6, p. 39).

Jan described her frustrations at trying to get in touch with her mentor, who was assigned to a different school building from her own. She said,

> My mentor is at a different school. This is my biggest complaint. I didn't really talk to him, he wasn't exactly easily accessible, but if you had an immediate need or problem. . . . If I had him in my building, I'd probably go to him. So many times, I'd like to run down and talk to my mentor, but not being able to get to a phone at my school wasn't easy, or him not being available. Rather than calling him, having him call me back, I could just go to [my colleagues], or deal with it on my own. (Vol. 4, pp. 13, 17)

In reference to her wish for a helpful person within easy reach, Fleur observed,

> I would have liked it if I would have had somebody, even if it wasn't a teacher, a trained person who understood all the ropes in the school, to be able to come in and look at what I am doing, or I could field questions and see if they can answer stuff that I have questions about. I believe it would be a serious hindrance if [your mentor] is somebody you have a personality conflict with, because I don't teach the way other teachers teach, and some people would see that as a flaw. They may say negative things about you because they don't agree with the way you do things. (Vol. 7, p. 13)

Informal Support by Colleagues

All 17 first-year teachers talked about the help proffered by colleagues, whether or not these colleagues served formally as assigned mentors. Terry remarked, "If it wasn't for my other grade level teachers, I would feel like I was going to drown. Just to know that I am not alone in what I am going through; there's support" (Vol. 1, p. 10). Yvette concurred, "The only help I got was from my other partner teacher and other staff in the building" (Vol. 5, p. 21).

Julie, Jan, and Maria talked about the help afforded by teachers at their grade level. Maria said, "The three of us that are new teachers here, we're talking to each other a lot" (Vol. 11, p. 36). Julie gave credit to her grade level colleagues: "There's two other third-grade teachers. They are excellent. They have really helped me. We work well together, we plan together. Sometimes we use their ideas and sometimes we use mine" (Vol. 6, p. 91). Jan's words agreed with the sentiment expressed by Julie. She described her experiences:

> My other sixth grade teacher that I work with, she's a first year teacher also, just going through it together helped us a lot. [Other teachers] have been a huge help this year, especially the one right next door to me. Just with small things, like if I needed a book, knowing she is always there. They helped me out a lot, mostly materials, some of it day-to-day things. (Vol. 4, p. 1)

Dawn, Angel, and Mitchell viewed their fellow teachers as beneficial, and seemed to have no hesitation in seeking and accepting help from others at their school. Dawn remarked, "Talking with other teachers was helpful. Being able to wander the building and walk into any classroom I wanted and ask questions. They were a very helpful and good staff" (Vol. 2, p. 53). Mitchell described his use of after-school time: "After school, that's the time we get to talk to other teachers, that's the time we get to bounce around and plan and say, 'Hey, what are you doing? Can I borrow this, can I borrow that?'" (Vol. 11, p. 24).

Angel commented on her feelings of being swept up by helpful colleagues, as she stated,

> The other teachers just enveloped me with all their knowledge and wisdom, and it was incredible. They helped me put up bulletin boards and things at the beginning of the year, they gave me opinions on how to set up the classroom; that was very helpful. (Vol. 6, p. 8)

Christie would have liked an opportunity to shadow another teacher. She said, "If you could shadow a person in an area that you are interested in, Reading Recovery or something like that, then again, it could be something to boost your day. Sometimes, talking things out would be wonderful" (Vol. 6, p. 66). Terry concluded,

> I just think the most effective thing is being in the classroom. You don't have to go to a different building to observe other teachers, but I just think you need something. I don't think giving first-year teachers more paperwork, a portfolio or that kind of stuff—in my opinion, that would take away from what I was trying to do in the classroom. The most [help] I've gotten has been from my mentor at school. (Vol. 1, pp. 19, 20)

Administrator and Corporation Support

First-year teachers participating in this study also commented on the amount and nature of support provided by their building principals. Six participants believed their principals demonstrated support. Eleven participants felt unsupported by their principals. Six participants also remarked on their feelings of abandonment by administrators at the corporate level. The following quotes emphasized the importance of positive support and feedback from administrators, in particular, building principals.

Terry and Yvette spoke positively about their principals. Terry remarked, "The principal is really involved. She makes it a point to be real visible. She just makes it known that she is there to help teachers grow professionally" (Vol., p. 6). Yvette saw her principal as a mother figure, describing her as follows.

> My principal was very supportive of letting me know the things that I was doing right. She was very easy to talk to, she was there to help me learn. If I could have my mom here as a principal, that was who she would be to me. (Vol. 5, pp. 20, 21)

Unfortunately, Dawn and Mitchell painted quite different pictures, describing a distinct lack of support by administrators. Dawn related one disastrous classroom visit.

> The lack of support comes more from the administration. One time [my principal] interrupted me. He started doing what people do to irritate other people when they're counting, doing the odd numbers. I was upset. I was afraid I would get marked down because the kids were so outrageous, and I had to have them put their heads down. (Vol. 2, p. 53)

Mitchell felt unsupported by his building level administrators, as he struggled to handle difficult student behaviors. He said,

> I have not gotten any positive feedback from the administrators. We are expected to handle the discipline problems, so things that would normally be sent down to the office, you are spending time doing it. (Vol. 11, p. 37)

Peggy and Faye mentioned the lack of support at the district level. Peggy said, "What if I had really been struggling? No one would have ever known. I didn't feel like I had support from the corporation at all as a new teacher" (Vol. 9, pp. 4, 8). Faye concurred, "I'm a little bit frustrated with the corporation in general. I asked certain questions, I get different answers, I don't get call-backs. I have either gotten the run-around or just have not gotten called back" (Vol. 5, p. 25).

Dawn described her repeated requests for basic learning material for her young children. Her requests seemed to fall upon deaf ears. She stated,

> I dug through old textbooks, for actual books to copy for kindergarteners, and then asked to have the reading program. I did not get the reading program for one and a half weeks, and I still don't have the math program. (Vol. 2, p. 49)

Corazon mentioned her desire for a checklist of items and when they were due. She said,

> Maybe a checklist of what we needed to accomplish as far as what you needed to turn in. Maybe at the end of the quarter, what your obligations would be, to fill out the academic cards and the grade cards, a list of all the things that are due. (Vol. 10, p. 4)

Interestingly, Ardis spent quite a bit of time describing an assistance program set in a business environment, and designed for new employees. Her husband was fortunate to have participated in this program. Her comments strongly contrasted this business program with the assistance she received as a first-year classroom teacher. Here are her words:

> My husband's in a business group and they take turns meeting people for lunch. I think the difference is that his boss took a lot of time to sit down and get to know him and talk to him. I know it's not always possible in teaching, but is anybody sitting down and asking how I was doing? (Vol. 2, p. 20)

Summary

In the preceding section, information gained from the first-year teacher interviews for the category, "Induction into the Teaching Profession," was discussed. Three main themes developed from the first-year teacher participant interviews: (a) Program; (b) Informal support by colleagues; and (c) Administrator and corporation support. The themes delineated for this category were reviewed, using examples of the participants' words to elaborate on key points.

When discussing the induction program and its components, all 17, or 100% of the participants in this study, aired their opinions on meetings for first-year teachers. Only 10 of the participants, or 59% of them, participated in an orientation session. Because they began teaching after the school year started, 7 of the participants, or 41%, had no opportunity to attend an orientation meeting, since just one such session was held at the beginning of the school year.

Five of the study participants, or 29%, mentioned that they would enjoy more chances to interact with other new teachers in a social setting. All of the participants said they would like opportunities to observe other teachers in classroom settings. Breaux and Wong (2003) underscored the importance of including visits to demonstration classrooms as a vital component of first-year teacher induction programs. Nine of the participants, or 53%, stated they would participate in a building level network of teachers, perhaps in a study group setting, similar to those described by Henriquez-Roark (1995), Joyce et al. (1989), and Murphy (1992).

In discussing their impressions of the help afforded by mentors, 100% of the first-year teacher participants contributed their ideas. Thirteen of the 17, or 76%, stated that

they were assigned a mentor teacher to assist them. Twelve of the 13 indicated that their mentor taught in the same school as they did. One participant reported that her mentor taught in a different school building. Four of the participants, or 23.5%, stated that they had no mentor assigned to them.

All 17 of the participants, or 100%, reported that colleagues in their schools offered informal assistance. Their colleagues supported them by providing sample lesson plans, teaching material, help in setting up the classroom, and advice.

Unfortunately, 11 of the 17 participants, or 65%, felt they received very little to no support from their principals. Six of the participants felt they received support and encouragement from their principals. In their research on effective first-year teacher induction programs, Johnson and Kardos (2002) highlighted the importance of school principals in ensuring teacher success. They indicated that principals who visibly engaged in the daily life of the school, as well as the professional lives of teachers, reaped the benefits of this support. The largest benefit gained through this visible support manifested itself in the form of lower teacher attrition rates.

Additionally, six of the participants, or 35%, did not feel supported by the school corporation. They described unreturned phone calls, unanswered questions, unavailable administrators, and incomplete communication, which amounted to lack of assistance and subsequent feelings of frustration and abandonment among the first-year teachers.

The results of the interviews with first-year teachers, for the category entitled "Induction Into the Teaching Profession" are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6

Induction into the Teaching Profession

Themes	***n*** **(*n*=17)**	**%**
Program		
Mentoring	17	100.0
Orientation	10	58.8
Would like:		
-socialization	5	29.4
-observe others	17	100.0
-building-level network	9	52.9
-less paperwork	2	11.8
Informal support by colleagues	17	100.0
Administrator and corporation support		
Principal support	6	35.2
No principal support	11	64.7
No corporation support	6	35.2

Complete Summary and Review of the Interviews

Key ideas identified from my interviews with first-year teachers fell into five general categories: (a) Development of Self as Teacher; (b) Interpersonal Relationships; (c) Pre-Service Preparation; (d) Actions and Tasks Associated With Teaching; and (e) Induction Into the Teaching Profession. (A summary of these data in graphic format can be found in Tables 2 through 6.)

First-year teachers in this study often used the word "overwhelmed" to describe their general feelings about their experiences. They frequently referred to their surprise and chagrin at the impact on classroom instruction of children's social issues, which teachers needed to address prior to even beginning the important work of educating children.

These teachers identified classroom management and student discipline as areas of great challenge for them as they began their teaching careers. All of the study participants spoke of their desire for continuing support from their university faculty, as these first-year teachers entered the classroom for the first time as professional educators. The study participants also expressed a need for additional coursework in classroom management, and techniques for addressing student discipline, as a part of pre-service learning at the university level.

The first-year teacher participants described the importance of their relationships with students to their success in increasing student learning. Describing teaching as a "calling" or "mission," these first-year teachers worked hard to develop positive interactions and communications with their students. Interactions of this nature frequently occurred during instructional time. However, working after school sponsoring activities, tutoring students, or assisting with school programs provided opportunities for the teachers to improve their interpersonal relationships with both the students and with the parents of these students.

The effect of school culture on degree of satisfaction with working conditions was well documented by Darling-Hammond (2003) and Johnson and Kardos (2002). "Veteran-oriented" professional cultures generally pushed first-year teachers to the margins of the school culture, with little induction into the professional life of the school. "Novice-oriented" professional cultures exhibited enthusiasm and energy, but little professional guidance on how to teach. "Integrated" professional cultures included a healthy balance of exchange across grade levels and experience levels, with support and professional development for all teachers (Johnson & Kardos, 2002). In reviewing the

interview transcriptions for this study, little evidence existed to support the presence of "integrated" professional cultures. The descriptions elicited from the participant interviews seemed to support the presence of "veteran-oriented" professional cultures in most of the 11 schools represented in the study, based on the interview transcriptions. In addition, a "novice-oriented" culture seemed to exist within those grade levels for which most or all of the teachers were beginners.

The actions and tasks of teaching presented the most challenges for the first-year teacher participants in the area of asserting appropriate student behavior. One hundred percent of the participants in this study struggled with this issue. In addition, time demands and the difficulties of balancing school work with family presented challenges for 13 of the 17, or 76%, of the participants.

First-year teacher participants in this study found the induction program in Midwestern City School District to be lacking in some key aspects of first-year teacher support. Not all first-year teachers in this district found opportunities to participate in the orientation, meetings, and mentoring components that comprised the program. The first-year teachers in this study relied on the support of sympathetic colleagues more than the support of their principals or assigned mentors. All study participants expressed a desire to visit classrooms and observe other teachers at work, as well as to network with other first-year teachers; however, few were afforded these opportunities. (A summary of these data can be viewed in Table 6.)

Wong (2001) wrote about the increasing numbers of first-year teachers who turned to the Worldwide Web to seek support, encouragement, lesson plans, and

resources. When faced with few other supports, two teachers participating in this study told of how they used the Internet to find lesson plans and resources.

Stansbury and Zimmerman (2000) classified teacher induction practices into two categories: "low intensity" help as opposed to "high intensity" help. "Low intensity" help included orientation, co-teaching, study groups, buddy teachers, and adjusted working conditions, such as reduced classloads. "High intensity" help referred to practices designed to improve teacher skills and increase student achievement, such as staff development or training sessions. Most of the induction practices for Midwestern City School District, as described by first-year teacher participants in this study, fit into the category of "low intensity" practices. In Midwestern City School District, the induction practices included orientation, meetings, and mentors.

The interviews with first-year teachers, described and illustrated here in great detail, mirrored the Phases of First-Year Teacher Development, described by Moir (1990) and Tetzlaff and Wagstaff (1999). The teachers described their early excitement in the *anticipation* phase, accompanied by romanticized concepts of the job, and early missionary ideals of saving the world (Moir, 1990; Veenman, 1984). Upon realizing the monumental amount of hard work, the extensive time commitment, and the intense personal effort that make up the everyday life of teachers, the beginners shifted into *survival* mode during the first few months. With the onset of parent teacher conferences, report cards, and classroom observations by principals, the first-year teachers gradually descended into the *disillusionment* phase.

Rejuvenation began in January, following a time of rest during the Christmas vacation period. The first-year teachers in this phase experienced a gradual rise in spirits

and a better understanding of the job. The phase entitled *reflection* came at the end of the school year, with thoughts of "what I will do differently next time."

The study described in this document took place at the entrance into the "reflection" time of year, during the months of April, May, and June. Perhaps this accounted for the reflective mode of thought exemplified in these interviews, the wealth of wisdom and insight, and the eagerness to express themselves, which characterized the study participants. Table 7 presents a graphic representation of the categories and themes identified in this study, arranged according to individual participants.

The "Ideal" First-Year Teacher Induction Program

First-year teachers in my research study described the following components that they felt comprised the "ideal" first-year teacher induction program:

1. orientation to the philosophy and procedures of the school and district
2. occasions on which to observe other teachers at work in their classrooms
3. time for networking with other first-year teachers
4. meetings that addressed topics pertinent to first-year teachers and their needs, with time to discuss classroom problems and concerns
5. a helpful and supportive mentor, located in the same school as the first-year teacher
6. a supportive building principal.

Table 7

Categories and Themes, Identified by Individual Participants

	Terry	Peggy	Elke	Faye	Yvette	Ardis	Fleur	Cat	Julie
Development of Self									
Qualities							♦	♦	♦
Image issues	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦		♦
Feelings	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Passion, mission	♦	♦		♦	♦		♦		
Idealism	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦
Background mismatch				♦	♦		♦	♦	♦
Resilience	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦
Reflective thinking	♦	♦		♦	♦				♦
Interpersonal Relationships									
Outside support				♦	♦	♦		♦	
Kids	♦			♦	♦		♦	♦	♦
Parents			♦				♦	♦	♦
School culture		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Pre-service Preparation									
College or university	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Job search				♦	♦	♦			
Children's social issues	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Induction into Profession									
Program	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Informal support	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Administration & corporation support	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Action & Tasks									
Instruction	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Classroom management & discipline	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Time management	♦		♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦

Table 7—*Continued.*

	Dawn	Corazon	Savannah	Christie	Jan	Mitchell	Maria	Angel
Development of Self								
Qualities	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Image issues	♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦
Feelings	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Passion, mission		♦		♦		♦	♦	♦
Idealism	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Background mismatch	♦			♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Resilience	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	
Reflective thinking	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Interpersonal Relationships								
Outside support	♦			♦		♦	♦	♦
Kids	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	
Parents		♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
School culture	♦		♦	♦		♦	♦	♦
Pre-service Preparation								
College or university	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Job search		♦						♦
Children's social issues	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Induction into Profession								
Program	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Informal support	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Administration & corporation support	♦		♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Action & Tasks								
Instruction	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Classroom management & discipline	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦	♦
Time management		♦	♦	♦		♦	♦	♦

Comparing exemplary induction programs to the one illuminated by first-year teachers in Midwestern City School District, several key components appeared to be missing from Midwestern City's program.

The first-year teachers mentioned only 1 day of orientation prior to the start of the school year. An examination of the interview transcriptions, as well as documents related to the first-year teacher induction program, revealed an absence of any workshops directly related to teaching, held in advance of the start of the school year. Orientation served only to acquaint the first-year teachers with policies and procedures of the school district.

Periodic meetings seemed to be scheduled, particularly before December. However, the interview participants indicated that these meetings sometimes were cancelled. Several of the participants eagerly anticipated the meetings, yet arrived only to find that the sessions had been cancelled.

The Midwestern City School District Induction Program documents suggested that mentors would be assigned to first-year teachers. Actually, 23% of the first-year teachers lacked the assistance of an assigned mentor to help and guide them.

My study thus demonstrated that orientation, mentoring, and meetings could be in place, as they were in Midwestern City School District, yet if not properly conducted, they failed to provide adequate support for first-year teachers. In order to be successful in supporting first-year teachers, induction programs must be well organized, ongoing, consistent, and meaningful to the participants.

A Review of Three Exemplary Programs

In order to investigate successful first-year teacher induction programs, in terms of number of new teachers lost in the first 2 years, a study of exemplary induction programs can prove to be fruitful. Wong (2002) provided a look at three of these exemplary programs. The programs included Flowing Wells School District, in Tucson, Arizona; Lafourche Parish Public Schools, in Thibodaux, Louisiana; and Port Huron Area Schools, in Port Huron, Michigan.

Flowing Wells School District, in Tucson, Arizona, included several days of special events for the first-year teachers. "Novice," or first-year teachers, met for several days prior to the start of the school year. Induction activities included:

1. A bus tour of the district, conducted by the superintendent of schools
2. Visits to demonstration classrooms, with lessons modeled by master teachers
3. A SPA (Special Professional Assistance) day, when first-year teachers and their mentors planned and worked together
4. A formal "graduation" luncheon for the first-year teachers and their mentors.

Lafourche Parish Public Schools, in Thibodaux, Louisiana, provided trainers for the teacher induction program, who "strive to immerse new teachers in the district's lifelong learning culture and help them become part of a cohesive, supportive instructional team" (Wong, 2002, p. 53). The program began with a 4-day training session for all new teachers, followed by 3 full years of ongoing support and assistance. The Lafourche program included demonstration classrooms and a graduation ceremony, much like the Flowing Wells program. Additionally, Lafourche offered monthly support group meetings and access to curriculum facilitators. Through this program, the

Lafourche Parish Schools reduced their teacher attrition rate by 80%. The state of Louisiana adopted this successful model as its statewide model for all school districts.

Port Huron Area Schools, in Port Huron, Michigan, developed their induction program as a joint effort between school administrators and the education association, serving as a model of teamwork in action. The program began with a 4-day orientation prior to the start of the school year. This advance work included workshops to introduce new teachers to district programs, and seminars on classroom management, professional standards, and preparation for the first days of school. Monthly meetings for first-year teachers throughout their first year, and the appointment of a mentor teacher, provided ongoing support.

Teacher Study Groups

Hernandez-Roark (1995), Joyce et al. (1989), and Murphy (1992) found that teacher study groups provided valuable opportunities for participants to engage in meaningful and collaborative conversation and problem solving. In particular, Rogers and Babinski (2002) researched teacher study groups made up of new teachers.

These new teacher groups supported first-year teachers through solving problems, sharing experiences, and discussing teaching techniques. In regard to the benefits gained by participants in these groups for new teachers, Rogers and Babinski stated, "This type of learner-centered, collaborative professional development is an essential but typically neglected component for assisting first-year teachers as they navigate the turbulent and often uncharted waters of the first year of teaching" (p. 83).

Participants in my study suggested that a group consisting of new teachers could provide support and assistance, since they were all in the "same boat." Such a program

appeared lacking in the induction program for Midwestern City School District. The study participants repeatedly revealed their wishes for participation in such a group. The induction opportunities available to participants in this study appear in Table 8.

Table 8

Induction Opportunities for Study Participants

Program Component	***n*** **(*n*=17)**	**%**
Orientation		
Opportunity to participate	10	58.8
No opportunity to participate	7	41.2
Mentor		
Mentor in same building	12	70.5
Mentor in a different building	1	6.0
No mentor	4	23.5
Meetings		
Opportunity to participate	10	58.8
No opportunity to participate	7	41.2
Informal Support by Colleagues	17	100.0
Support by Administrators		
Supportive principal	6	35.3
Non-supportive principal	11	64.7

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I saw the angel in the marble, and I carved until I set him free.
—Michelangelo

Introduction

This chapter contains a summary of the study, review of the purpose of the study, and consideration of the research questions. In addition, readers of this chapter will find conclusions of the study, as well as recommendations and implications for program planners, for college and university faculty, for school administrators, and for new teachers. Finally, this chapter includes suggestions for future research.

Summary

With the increasing national focus on student achievement, the need to attract and keep qualified and dedicated teachers becomes ever more important. Effective induction programs for first-year teachers can significantly reduce the feelings of stress, isolation, and overwhelming doubt, common challenges for new teachers. In addition, some populations of "new" teachers may not be receiving needed assistance.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this interpretive study, set within the experiential context of the first-year teacher, was to discover: (a) first-year teacher perceptions of their classroom experiences during their first year of teaching; and (b) first-year teacher perceptions of the role teacher induction programs play in assisting first-year teachers to deal with the challenges of their first year in the classroom.

Description of Population

Participants for this study were delimited to practicing K-6 classroom educators in an urban school district located in northern Indiana. The population for this study was further delimited to teachers completing their first year of experience in the teaching profession, following their graduation from college. Only professionally trained teachers who were teaching in a single-grade classroom participated.

The population for this study included 17 first-year teacher participants, out of a total of 21 eligible for participation in the study, during the 2002-2003 school year. Four teachers indicated a willingness to find out more about the study; however, they later declined to participate due to personal time constraints.

Review of Methodology

This study employed an interpretive qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews as the primary method of gathering data. Other materials were obtained from the teacher participants themselves, and from building principals or program directors when appropriate. These materials included field notes, poems written

by the teacher participants, and print material directly related to the beginning teacher induction program in place for the school district under study.

Names of prospective participants were obtained from building principals, from the induction program director, and from participants in this study. A pilot study in 2002 preceded this study; as a result of the pilot study, the interview questions and methodology received close scrutiny and subsequent adjustment or revision.

An invitation letter was sent to each prospective participant; follow-up phone calls confirmed each participant's desire to take part in the study. Seventeen participants accepted the invitations and signed consent forms. Interviews were conducted during the months of April, May, and June 2003, with times and sites for the interviews selected by the participants. The interviews lasted from 60 to 120 minutes each.

An interview protocol included the core questions used for the sessions. Additional questions evolved as the interviews progressed, depending on participant responses to the core questions. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were then placed in volumes, with one volume per school site. Transcriptions were then returned to the participants for review, comment, and verification. Data analysis consisted of multi-level open coding for themes, which then were grouped into larger categories.

Poems written by the first-year teachers were also analyzed using the same method of coding as that used for the interview transcriptions. Documents regarding the teacher induction program were examined, in order to determine specific details of the induction program components.

Results

The following section focuses upon the answers to the research questions that were stated at the beginning of this study.

Research Question 1. How do first-year teacher challenges and the nature of the school context affect beginning classroom experiences?

First-year teacher participants in this study most often described their experiences as "overwhelming," "frustrating," "challenging," "intimidating," and "disillusioning." However, they alternatively used the terms "joyful," "rewarding," "amazing," and "exciting." The new teachers described feelings of loneliness, isolation, disappointment with the school culture, and inadequacy in addressing student social needs. They expressed happiness at finally beginning the career for which they had so long prepared, finding it thrilling to see students learn and grasp new information and concepts. In addition, the first-year teachers believed they were continuing to learn and grow rapidly in their profession.

The challenges most often cited by the participants in my study included asserting student discipline and addressing children's social issues. Besides these trials, new teachers cited lack of administrative support, insufficient resources, inexperience with the variation in student abilities, uncertainty of how to fit into the school culture, difficulty dealing with conflicts, and unfamiliarity with curriculum, as significant challenges experienced on a daily basis. Ideally, an effective induction program seeks to address and alleviate many of these first-year teacher problems.

First-year teachers in this study cited a supportive school culture and a proactive building principal as key factors in their successful development as first-year teachers.

Interactions with colleagues who embraced an overly authoritarian pedagogy, and a lack of care for others as human beings, presented a visibly negative influence on first-year teacher development. In addition, two study participants described an overall school atmosphere in which care for the physical plant overshadowed care for children.

Unfortunately, as described by 12 of the teacher participants, veteran-oriented cultures seemed to characterize the schools inhabited by the first-year teachers in this study. This statement can be supported through an examination of the interview transcriptions for descriptions of school cultures and working conditions. First-year teachers in my study characterized their schools using phrases such as "having a 'crush them' atmosphere"; "teachers not really working together"; and "not feeling like I fit in."

Research Question 2. How did the teacher induction program under study support first-year teachers?

Teacher induction programs that are functioning well should provide support in three forms. These three components include: (a) orientation to the school district and procedures, (b) assignment of a mentor, and (c) ongoing training for at least 2 years. Effective induction programs support new teachers by offering intensive training prior to the official opening of the school year; providing opportunities for beginners to observe experienced teachers in model classrooms; and ongoing support in the form of new teacher groups, meetings, and continuing education.

These programs help new teachers by affording tools, resources, and ideas for starting the school year, as well as continuing both human and logistic support as the school year progresses. New teachers in successful and effective induction programs find opportunities to meet with other first-year teachers for problem solving and networking

sessions, as well as to observe experienced teachers in model classrooms. Ongoing staff development gatherings provide the means for new teachers to hone their skills in instructional strategies and in managing student behavior. Finally, introducing first-year teachers to well-trained and experienced mentors gives them "touchstone" individuals who support, teach, and encourage them throughout the first few years of their careers. Greater retention of highly qualified new teachers ensures continuing success for teaching and for student learning, in both the school and the district.

First-year teachers in this study reported a woeful lack of the components outlined above, in the school district induction program under study. Orientation prior to the start of the school year occurred in a rapid, sketchy fashion, for those fortunate enough to have a chance to participate. The program consisted of a 1-day meeting, and served as a rapid "who's who and what's what" of administrative details, insurance benefits, calendars, and lists, comprising the mechanics of the school district procedures.

Each participant received a notebook with a copy of the PowerPoint notes for the introductory program, along with other documents related to the school district, such as calendars and lists of phone numbers. This book could serve as a reference book for new teachers. However, one teacher participant presented me with her copy of the induction program notebook. She told me that I could keep the book, as she believed she would never have any use for it in the future. The comments of this first-year teacher underscore the ineffectiveness of this reference book in her eyes.

For those receiving mentor support, accessibility to mentors and the help they could provide varied greatly among the participants, as did the quality of the help provided. For those fortunate enough to be assigned a mentor, the relationship between

mentor and mentee proved most valuable when both individuals taught in the same building. These relationships seemed to be positive for both mentor and mentee, according to the interview transcriptions. This type of human support proved most valuable and needed by the first-year teachers to whom a mentor was assigned, and represented a positive and assistive aspect of the induction program in this school district. For those to whom no mentor was assigned, voluntary informal colleague support provided answers to questions, resources for teaching, and sympathetic listening ears, which should have been provided by a formal mentor.

Bi-weekly meetings during the first 3 months of school provided opportunities for first-year teachers to receive information about topics of current need and interest, depending on the particular time and events of the school year. During the rest of the school year, the meetings were scheduled for once a month.

Guest speakers and panels of individuals presented information to the participants. Topics included classroom policies and procedures, record keeping, standardized testing, classroom management, lesson plans, report cards and parent conferences, diversity, and technology. From the perspective of the induction program planners, these topics certainly comprised a list worthy of the attention and interest of first-year teachers.

However, according to the first-year teachers themselves, rather than addressing the needs of the participants to interact with other new teachers, the sporadic meetings were often a rehash of college courses. The participants perceived this review of undergraduate coursework to be unnecessary.

Additionally, an examination of both the program documents and the interview transcriptions failed to yield any indications of visits to model classrooms, observations of master teachers at work, sharing of teaching materials, or discussions among the first-year teachers. Finally, the concept of ongoing training for first-year teachers for a minimum of 2 years, was neither mentioned by the participants nor found within the program documents.

Research Question 3. *How would first-year teachers describe the "ideal" first-year teacher induction program?*

The three essential components for effective first-year teacher induction programs include: (a) orientation, (b) mentoring, and (c) meetings or some other form of continuing education. Induction must include training, support, and retention. During our interviews, the first-year teacher participants addressed all three of these components.

They suggested that a successful induction program should include training that occurs prior to the actual start of the school year. This training would offer opportunities for first-year teachers to learn about their new school district, to plan for the first days of school, to meet other first-year teachers, and to review best practices for increasing student achievement. The first-year teacher participants expressed a desire to visit demonstration classrooms, where they could watch experienced master teachers in action. Opportunities for interactions and networking with other teachers, in order to exchange ideas and deconstruct problem situations, also would constitute key elements of induction programs that meet the needs of first-year teachers.

Additionally, ongoing instruction and training for first-year teachers should continue for a minimum of 2 years. Just as physicians serve a period of residency, these

first-year teachers need additional support and learning opportunities during the first 2 critical years of teaching.

Administrative support, mentoring, and effective staff development should serve as key components of exemplary induction programs for first-year teachers. The teacher participants in this study voiced their wish for a supportive building principal, one who communicated frequently with them, and provided needed human support, encouragement, and resources. In addition, the necessity of a caring, knowledgeable, and helpful mentor, teaching in the same school building, cannot be overlooked as a necessity for all first-year teachers, regardless of whether they begin at the start of the school year, or after the school year has already begun. Finally, ongoing effective staff development in best practices to support teaching and learning serves as the foundation for continuing professional growth and improvement. First-year teachers expressed a desire to continue to learn and to improve their teaching skills, by interactions with other professionals as part of a learning community.

Research Question 4. Which needs of adult learners were most effectively addressed by the teacher induction program under study?

Adults learn best when they can build on past experiences, sharing new ideas with their colleagues and relating new learning to situations that form an integral part of their personal or professional lives. The most appropriate educational programs for adults utilize quick paced, varied teaching methods within a safe and comfortable setting, with time built in for reflection on both the processes and the products of learning. Excellent instructors of adults sustain interest by incorporating small group sessions, discussions,

and problem-based activities, which allow many opportunities for interactions among participants.

Participants in my study expressed a desire to network with other new teachers and to observe other teachers teaching, rather than listening to speakers at each meeting. Further, they perceived that the topics for the meetings were predetermined, and wondered if first-year teachers ever had input into the meeting agendas. Although I found the study participants to be quite reflective individuals, and highly capable of sensitivity and introspection, their comments did not reflect the presence of a contemplative component to the induction program. My research indicated that the characteristics of adult learners were not always addressed in the program experienced by the research participants.

Of the assumptions and ideas regarding adult learners expressed by Knowles (1984, 1998) and by other researchers, the teacher induction program under investigation in this research study should have addressed the adult need to relate new learning to important aspects of the adult's personal and professional life, since induction programs directly address the work situation of the new teacher. Additionally, the assumption that adults are motivated by internal pressures, such as self-esteem or quality of life, could have formed the foundation for this induction program, in that new teachers desire to both be and appear successful in their chosen careers, to maintain feelings of positive self-esteem, and to effectively balance both the personal and professional aspects of their lives.

However, the directors of the induction program under study might have been unaware of the needs of adult learners. Perhaps time constraints influenced the

implementation of training programs based mainly on guest speakers. The participants often mentioned that the training sessions were planned with no input from the first-year teachers who would be participating in those sessions. Rather than addressing the pressing day-to-day demands experienced by the first-year teachers, topics chosen by the directors often duplicated information learned in pre-service teacher education programs. Little opportunity to interact and network with other teachers existed in this program. The induction process failed to alleviate the feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and isolation that most of the first-year teachers faced.

Research Question 5. Which needs of adult learners did the teacher induction program under study fail to address?

Unfortunately for the first-year teacher participants in this study, fewer needs of adult learners were addressed than neglected. First, all first-year teachers proceeded through the same program at the same pace, with a singular disregard for background experiences, and little or no opportunity to discuss with others, reflect upon, or relate those experiences to the work at hand. Small group sessions, discussions, and problem-based activities, allowing opportunities for interactions among participants, seemed non-existent.

Second, the induction activities described by the first-year teachers in this Midwestern school district afforded few if any opportunities for the teachers to provide input into either the topics or the activities comprising the induction meetings. Upon arrival at the meetings, first-year teachers found the agenda already set, speakers engaged, with little opportunity for interaction and discussion with their new teacher colleagues.

Orientation occurred only one time at the start of the school year, offering no opportunity for participation to teachers hired after this time. Ideal first-year teacher induction programs provide orientation two times during the school year: once in August and again in January. Thus, new teachers who are hired after the start of the school year do not have to wait until the following year to become oriented to the school district and begin the induction process. This represents best practice in planning first-year teacher induction programs. The school district can take this opportunity for new teachers to become attuned to the philosophy, policies, and practices of the school district, and to attain current information on best practices in teaching. This prevents the first-year teachers from gaining a different, perhaps negative, viewpoint of the school district, as provided by individuals other than trainers or administrators.

Third, communication with new teachers regarding the induction activities seemed spotty and inconsistent at best. Many new teachers who should have attended the meetings lacked vital information regarding time and location of these gatherings. Meetings seemed to be frequently cancelled, showing a disregard for the time and commitment of the new teachers, as well as a lack of closure for the learning experience. Some participants related instances in which they arrived at the indicated location, and found difficulties obtaining admittance to the facility; or, upon arriving in a timely fashion, waited for extended periods of time before finding out that the meeting had been cancelled. Few adults would consider this situation indicative of a safe and comfortable learning environment.

Conclusions

Common problems exist among first-year teachers, and are well documented in the research literature. The high cost of new teacher attrition to school districts becomes readily apparent, as the number of new teachers leaving the profession sharply increased from 1994 to 2000. With the advent of No Child Left Behind, and the requirement for highly qualified teachers in every classroom, the exodus of these teachers becomes an increasingly critical situation.

The participants in this study encountered characteristic first-year teacher problems, similar to those found in the research literature. The first-year teachers often used the word "overwhelming" to describe their first-year teacher experiences.

These first-year teachers believed they entered the teaching profession with an adequate knowledge base in subject matter. They lacked a sufficient background in classroom management, student discipline, knowledge of children's social issues, and interpersonal skills.

The teachers in this study viewed personal qualities or attributes as key to their success, rather than specific background knowledge or preparation. These attributes included organizational capabilities, willingness to work hard, flexibility, collaborative attitude, confidence, and aggressiveness in finding information and answers to questions. In addition, the first-year teachers in this study did not attribute their successes to the school district's induction program.

A supportive building principal, as well as supportive colleagues and a positive school culture, play an important role in assisting first-year teachers to move through the survival and disillusionment phases, to the rejuvenation and reflection phases of new

teacher development. First-year teachers in this study expressed their belief that human assistance proved more helpful to them than attending meetings or listening to speakers.

Human aspects of teaching, such as assisting new teachers to manage time, alleviate stress, and balance family obligations, must be addressed, in addition to the logistical aspects of planning lessons and obtaining resources. The inclusion of new teacher study groups as a part of new teacher induction programs, can serve to support these "human" aspects of teaching. The study groups provide an opportunity for first-year teachers to gain collaborative assistance in problem solving, to access alternative viewpoints to situations, and to vent their frustrations in a supportive environment.

First-year teachers desire to network with other first-year teachers, as comrades with whom they can share their problems and safely discuss possible solutions, without fear of reprisal or ridicule. The comments of these beginners emphasized their need to be listened to, and to have their experiences and feelings confirmed. The participants in this study often expressed their enjoyment of the opportunity, provided by this research study, to take part in the interviews, to be heard, and to find their ideas valued.

For induction programs to be successful in assisting new teachers to skillfully weather their first year in the classroom, these induction programs need to be well organized and planned, with a study of first-year teacher needs and adult learner characteristics serving as foundational principles for the program. Induction programs need to include all three components: orientation, mentoring, and meetings or some other form of continuing education. These programs should extend beyond the first year of teaching, with an emphasis on improving instruction, leading to improved student

achievement. Induction programs help to promote new teacher improvement and success only if the participants view the programs as useful and relevant.

Studying exemplary induction programs, such as Flowing Wells School District, Lafourche Parish Public Schools, and Port Huron Area Schools, can provide a foundation for planning successful first-year teacher induction programs. In addition, seeking input from both first-year and experienced teachers allows the inclusion of a variety of viewpoints and ideas when planning and implementing programs designed to assist new teachers.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered for the improvement of the new teacher induction program in Midwestern City School District.

1. In order for an induction program to prove effective in supporting new Teachers as they enter the teaching profession, three components should be included: (a) orientation prior to the start of the school year; (b) support through mentoring; and (c) continuing education. This continuing education should take the form of study groups or teacher networks, models of effective teaching, and demonstration classrooms, as well as meetings and training sessions. The induction program should extend beyond the first year of teaching, in order to provide maximum support for new teachers.

2. Opportunities for participation in the induction program should be offered in both August and January, so that all first-year teachers may participate. This would provide support for those who begin their first year of teaching after the traditional opening of the school year.

3. The induction program should include opportunities for first-year teachers to

network with other first-year teachers, through initiatives such as new teacher groups.

4. The induction program should include time and opportunities for first-year teachers to observe other teachers in action, such as in model classrooms.

5. Universities and colleges should continually assess their undergraduate education programs. These extra efforts allow restructuring pre-service coursework and experiences as needed, so as to place potential teachers in classrooms as soon as possible. In addition, universities and colleges should seek ways in which to maintain contact with, and find ways to support, their first-year teacher graduates during these teachers' first years, as they transition from student to teacher. Establishment of school-university partnerships or professional development schools could prove to be valuable starting points in providing these types of support.

Implications of the Study

For Program Directors

When planning induction program activities, program directors should review the current research literature regarding needs of adult learners and learner-centered principles of instruction. This could ensure that the components of the program include activities that address the needs of first-year teachers as adult learners. Orientation sessions provide adequate introductions to the school district and to common work-related procedures. However, according to the participants in this study, orientation that occurs only once, at the start of the school year, allows some new teachers to fall through the cracks. In order to be effective, at least one additional session, for post-orientation hires, should be held following the initial one. Detailed reference material should be provided for all participants.

The first-year teacher participants in this study strongly indicated that colleague support proved far more valuable than meetings or orientation. Program directors for first-year teacher induction should seek means of incorporating ample time for new teachers to establish connections with professional colleagues, so as to ensure maximum impact of the program in supporting new teachers. This connection could be accomplished through interactions within social as well as professional settings. New teacher study groups also would permit new teachers to interact with each other, to engage in collective problem solving and discussion in a safe and comfortable setting, and to establish a network of support.

Further, the study participants requested opportunities to observe other teachers in action. Program directors would find the time well spent in arranging half-day visits for first-year teachers to observe model classrooms and shadow master teachers in action. Perhaps a workable solution might be to combine a classroom observation with time for questioning, discussion, and processing. Providing sample documents, such as grade books, lesson plan books, and teacher-created materials and resources would also constitute a valuable part of this training.

Consistent and open communication between first-year teachers and both new and experienced educators is essential, to avoid first-year teacher isolation and feelings of abandonment. These educators could include classroom teachers, program directors, induction program trainers, school and district administrators, and university professors. An email list serve could operate as a forum, in which teacher participants could suggest topics for meeting discussion. The use of paper memos and faxes could further enhance this communication. When planning for meetings of first-year teachers, program

directors could send out memos to seek input from first-year teachers regarding the topics to be discussed. Time to dialogue with other teachers could also form a valuable part of the meetings.

Finally, when assigning mentors, care should be taken to assign mentors who are easily accessible to the first-year teacher. This reduces the frustration and feelings of helplessness that result when mentors teach in schools far distant from the first-year teacher. Attempts should be made to match the mentor and beginner in terms of teaching area; and, mentors should receive screening as well as training, to ensure that they demonstrate both the willingness and the ability to provide support to the teachers to whom they are assigned.

For School Administrators

The support of the building level administrator is essential to the success of first-year teachers. Building principals can increase the retention rate of first-year teachers by presenting a visible and supportive presence for their new teachers. These administrators can support their new teachers by providing non-threatening, open communication opportunities with both new teachers and their mentors; by often visiting the classrooms of new teachers in a non-evaluative capacity; and by striving to establish a supportive and professional school culture.

Building level administrators also show support for new teachers by providing them with time to observe other teachers in action, supporting new teacher attendance at induction meetings and training activities, and affording novice status if possible, depending on the district's master contract. Novice status may involve a reduced class load, or the use of formative, rather than summative, evaluation procedures. Finally,

school principals or administrators can dignify the presence and expertise of the new teacher by asking for new teacher input during faculty and staff development meetings; and, by devoting time and attention to instruction, curriculum, assessment, and classroom management topics for all teachers during faculty meetings and staff development activities.

For College and University Faculty

According to the participants in this study, colleges and universities provided adequate and appropriate subject area instruction for preservice teachers. However, the areas in which first-year teachers needed further preservice preparation seemed to be in seeking a teaching position, managing student discipline, dealing with conflict, interacting with a variety of people, and addressing state standards. In addition, the first-year teachers in this study described a need for early introduction to the social needs of children and to the problems of the urban school environment.

Perhaps teacher educators need to strive to increase realistic preservice preparation opportunities through early introduction to the classroom setting. Additionally, case studies and videos of live classroom situations, role play enactments, and visits to the university classroom by practicing first-year and veteran teachers provide support and contact with the real world of the school setting. Also, first-year teachers seem to desire an ongoing relationship and guidance from their university instructors. One way to address these issues would be the establishment of more school-university partnerships or professional development schools; as always, adequate funding for these programs presents a challenge.

For First-Year Teachers

The first-year teachers in this study seemed perfectly willing and eager to reflect upon their first-year experiences, with the goal of providing suggestions for the next generation of new teachers. These teachers advised those individuals seeking a teaching position to be aggressive, visible, outgoing, and persistent. Six of the study participants asserted the importance of being organized from the start of the school year. They underscored the need to establish realistic expectations for oneself and for the job, to be willing to work hard, and to be brave in actively seeking help from others.

Speaking of personal qualities, the participants in this study advised those new to the teaching profession to demonstrate self-confidence, even if internally lacking in this quality. They further recommended that new teachers be "mean, strict, and in charge from the beginning"; there will be plenty of time to relax once the new person has firmly established him or herself as a figure of authority in the classroom. The participants described the importance and necessity of finding one's own style and methods, regardless of the nature of the school culture. They suggested that new teachers remain collaborative and flexible, learn to communicate with others, seek opportunities to interact with other new teachers, and search for information on the World Wide Web, if no other means of support, interaction, and resources presented themselves.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further ideas for continuing research on the topic of first-year teacher induction suggest themselves as a means of extending the work just begun in this study.

1. In order to enlarge the catchment area of this study to include a larger part of

the state of Indiana, a quantitative study on this topic could be conducted through survey research. This would serve to generalize the results and confirm the recommendations described in this document.

2. A comparison study of different school district induction programs, as related to new teacher job satisfaction and retention, might also provide instructive information for those charged with the task of planning induction programs.

3. Many organizations in the private sector include extensive training and education programs for new employees. A study comparing new teacher induction programs to new employee training programs utilized in business and industry could provide interesting and enlightening data for improving the induction of new teachers.

4. One group of "new" teachers not embraced by this study includes those experienced teachers either new to a district, or returning to classroom teaching following an absence. A study focusing on the needs of these individuals could add valuable information to the body of research addressing first-year teachers.

5. Another perspective on this topic would be a study of "second career" teachers, a few of whom served as participants in this research study, focusing upon the effect of life experiences on their ability to adapt to the teaching profession.

6. Colleges and universities might find helpful a study on the effectiveness of professional development schools in enhancing preservice teacher education. A professional development school is defined as one in which a university forms a partnership with a school district, with the intention of enhancing pre-service teacher preparation. The university contributes the expertise of faculty members, who conduct preservice classes on site in an elementary or secondary school building. This

partnership provides the opportunity for preservice teachers to observe master teachers in action in model classrooms; then, adjourn to an adjacent meeting room for discussion.

7. In addition, a replication in 5 years of the research conducted in my study might show whether current changes to university preservice programs have a positive effect upon the success of new teachers.

8. A study of the relationship of college or university size to new teacher success might also prove interesting and valuable.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

LETTERS

INVITATION TO PARTICIPANTS

May 1, 2003

Dear Participant,

Ms. Program Director expressed to me that you may be willing to participate in a research study about beginning teachers. I would like to meet with you for a short interview, consisting of open-ended questions, regarding your experiences as a beginning teacher. This will be for the purposes of a descriptive study, and is not related to any evaluation.

I will ask you to sign an informed consent agreement, and will tape record the interview. Your answers will remain confidential, and I agree not to reveal your identity without your written consent. Your participation in this study is valuable, as the information you provide can help to improve programs designed to assist beginning teachers.

I will phone you shortly to find a day that works for us both. I will ask you to choose the location at which to meet for the interview. Again, thanks for your willingness to assist with this important research.

Wishing you the best always,

Cheryl Torok Fleming

FOLLOW-UP LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

May 19, 2003

Dear Participant,

Several weeks ago, I sent you a letter regarding the possibility of your participation in a research study on beginning teachers. This research forms the basis for my doctoral dissertation. I would like to set a time at the end of May or beginning of June, when I can meet with you for about one hour, in order to listen to your thoughts and insights about your experiences as a beginning teacher.

I will call you in the next few days, in order to schedule our time together, if you are still willing to help with this important research. Your ideas about your beginning teacher experience will be used to assist in planning programs which help beginning teachers have a successful start to their careers. If you have any questions, or wish to contact me, please call me at Perley School at (574) 283-8735 or at my home at (574) 259-5037.

Wishing you the best always,

Cheryl Torok Fleming

FINAL LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

June 2, 2003

Dear Participant,

In March, your program director indicated to me that you might be able to assist me with my research for my dissertation, on the topic of beginning teachers and their experiences. Several weeks ago, I sent you a letter regarding the possibility of your participation in this research study on beginning teachers, which forms the basis for my doctoral dissertation. I left several messages for you, but have not been able to get in touch with you to schedule our time together. I would need to set a time during the month of June, when I can meet with you for about one hour, in order to listen to your thoughts and insights about your experiences as a beginning teacher.

Your ideas about your beginning teacher experience would be used to assist in planning programs which help beginning teachers have a successful start to their careers. If you are still able to assist me with this research, please call me at Perley School at (574) 283-8735 or at my home at (574) 259-5037.

Wishing you the best always,

Cheryl Torok Fleming

THANK YOU LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS

June 5, 2003

Dear Participant,

Thanks again for taking the time from your busy schedule to participate in my dissertation research. I appreciate your willingness to make this contribution to improving programs designed to help beginning teachers get a good start as professional educators.

If you think of any additional information for my study, please e-mail me at cherylfleming@juno.com prior to June 30, 2003. Once again, thank you for your assistance. I wish you much luck as you pursue your career in education.

Wishing you the best always,

Cheryl Torok Fleming

REQUEST TO PARTICIPANT TO REVIEW INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

School of Education, Leadership Program
Cheryl Torok Fleming, Graduate Student in Leadership
Dr. James Jeffery, Research Advisor

September 9, 2003

Dear Participant,

Enclosed you will find the final transcription of our interview, which forms part of the research for my dissertation, entitled *Beginning Teacher Perceptions of a Beginning Teacher Induction Program in the Midwestern United States*. Please review the transcription, noting any ideas or themes that you find to be evident, as well as any additions or corrections.

Following your review of this transcription, I ask that you contact me by phone, e-mail, or in writing, with your insights and comments. You may wish to make your notations in the text boxes, located to the right of the text on the transcription, and then send the original transcript back to me. However, this is your choice, and is not required of you as a participant in this study. As always, your responses remain confidential, and your identity will not be revealed without your written consent.

My contact information is listed at the bottom of this letter. I thank you for your willingness to participate in this important research, and look forward to hearing from you with your thoughts and ideas.

Wishing you the best always,

Cheryl Torok Fleming

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact:

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MEMO TO REVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS: PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUE

December 12, 2003

Debbie,

Thanks for agreeing to help validate my research by reading and commenting on the tape transcripts from my interviews with beginning teachers. Attached you will find copies of two of my tape transcriptions. Please read over them, writing your comments directly on the transcripts. I would appreciate any comments, thoughts, or ideas about what the participants are saying, including major ideas or themes that you perceive in the participant's responses. Thanks again for helping with this!

Cheryl Fleming

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW DOCUMENTS

CONSENT FORM

School of Education, Leadership Program
Cheryl Torok Fleming, Graduate Student in Leadership
Dr. James Jeffery, Research Advisor

Adult Consent for Own Participation

Title of Study: *Beginning Teacher Perceptions of a Beginning Teacher Induction Program in the Midwestern United States.*

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the needs of beginning teachers, and to determine what schools can do to best assist them in achieving a successful beginning to, or transition within, their teaching careers.

Procedure: If you decide to participate in this study, your involvement will take no more than 1 hour of your time. You will be asked to answer a series of open-ended questions about your experiences as a beginning teacher. Your answers will be recorded and transcribed.

Risks and Discomforts: I understand that no foreseeable risks exist for me as a participant in this research, since the study does not involve a treatment.

Benefits: I understand there are no benefits or compensation in return for my participation. My contribution to this study lies in possible improvements to the training of teachers new to the profession. I understand that the information collected during this study will be included in a Doctoral Dissertation, and may be presented or published in professional journals or meetings.

Voluntary Participation: My participation is completely voluntary, and I am free to refuse or to stop at any time. This is a descriptive, non-evaluative study; my answers will be coded and kept strictly confidential. My identity will not be revealed without my written consent.

After reading the following paragraph, and if you agree to participate, please sign below.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that any information about me obtained from this research will be kept strictly confidential.

Participant's Signature _____ Date_____

Printed Name_____ Date_____

Witness_____ Date_____

If you have any questions after our interview, please feel free to contact:

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PARTICIPANTS: REQUEST FOR DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic Information						
Gender	Male	Female				
Ethnic Group	White	Afro-American	Hispanic	Asian	Native-American	Multiracial
Age	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70 or over
# of years in Education	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26 or over
# of years in corporation	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26 or over
# of years in current building	0-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26 or over
Student Population	Urban	Suburban	Rural			
Type of School	Public	Private				
# of teachers at your school						
# of new or beginning teachers at your school						
SES (school)	>50% poverty	Low-Middle	Middle	Upper-middle	Upper	
# of students in your school	<300	300-500	501-700	701-900	>900	
Grade configuration	PreK-6	K-6	4-6	7-8	9-12	other
Grade you teach						
# of students in your class						
Type of college attended	Public	Private	Small	Large		
Is Education your primary area of certification?	Yes	No	If NO, what is primary area?			
Did you work in other area first?	Yes	No	If YES, what was it?			

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Questions

1. Talk to me a bit about what it feels like to be a beginning teacher.

2. Describe the three biggest challenges you face as a beginning teacher.

3. In which aspects of your teaching did you need the most support?

4. If you could plan the ideal beginning teacher assistance program, how would it look? Describe the components, setting, and presentation methods of this program.

5. Describe the components of the beginning teacher assistance program/support at your (a) school and (b) corporation.

6. What part(s) of the (a) school and (b) corporation program(s) proved most beneficial to you and why?

7. What areas of teaching seemed to you to be less than adequately covered in college coursework, or came as a surprise to you?

8. How would you describe a successful, as opposed to an unsuccessful, beginning teacher?

9. What metaphor would you use to describe beginning teaching?

10. What advice would you give to beginning teachers?

APPENDIX C

POEMS CREATED BY TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

How to Describe a Teacher
Teacher
Helpful, sweet
Caring, explaining
Educator
--"Jan"

A Test of Personal Strength
Everyone wondered why I wanted to teach and "waste my intelligence"
But I was determined to care, help and prove my strength.
I was warned not to tackle too much and dive in over my head
But I wanted a challenge in the city so I listened to myself instead.
I had two overwhelming days to clean, organize, and prepare
As well as meet all of my students who brought with them hundreds of relatives that care.
Throughout the year, many events were filled with joy and frustration.
Some days I felt weak, like I couldn't accomplish anything,
When I assigned detention after detention, praying for the bell to ring.
After a rough day that felt like a battle against the entire classroom
The principal would abandon me and parents would call with voices filled with doom.
The difficult days left me feeling emotionally drained
Making me want to sleep for hours on end to take away the pain.
However, most days I feel like I am productive and I am building my own strength.
I beam with pride when the students master skills after practicing for great lengths.
I love laughing, talking, and learning with all of the kids
And when I receive a compliment I blush and inside I shout, "I did it!"
Through it all, I feel fortunate to have the energy to give the students my all through this career.
I'm determined to grow stronger and accomplish even more during my second year.
--"Cat"

Untitled
To teach is to. . .
Exercise young minds, to
Always learn new knowledge, to
Care for children, to
Help struggling students, to
Earn and give respect, to
Reflect on today and adapt for tomorrow, and to
See small successes as miracles.
--"Dawn"

Untitled
Oh my gosh! I got a job,
My heart begins a serious throb,
I walk into a sea of children,
Can I teach them something that will thrill them,
So much work for me to do,
And a date it's due, that seems too few,
Can I really make it through!

The children are whining, "This is hard!"
Can I show them the concepts so they stick like lard,
I feel like I'm chasing my tail around,
Will everything they learn be lost on the ground?
There's no mentor to guide me,
And sometimes I wish someone would please just hide me,
Let another do the chore,
Someone who really knows the score!

At the end of the day,
I look back and I say,
A job well done my dear,
Well, maybe . . .only for some I fear,
So I keep trying my best,
To reach all the rest,
Because it's such a strife,
But it really is my whole life!!
--"Fleur"

A Teaching Metaphor
Teaching is like a box of chocolates,
You have to be willing to try new flavors,
And remember that they are all very sweet.
--"Savannah"

The First Year

The first year of teaching
Is hard to explain
It's not what I was reaching
When I signed my name.

Up high on the rooftop
With eyes closed tight
Spinning, unable to stop
I mustn't give up the flight.

Which way to go
Fragile stepping each day
To the left, the right, I do not know
I must be careful with every which way.

Too close to the edge
My feet so unstable
Carefully I must tredge
If I want to be able.

Ups, downs
I feel little's been raised
Too many frowns
Not enough praise.

A year of learning
Some good, some bad
I am so yearning
For next year to make me glad.

--"Maria"

Roller Coaster Ride

The ups and downs of a roller coaster ride
Are the feelings I've had this year as I hide
In a second grade classroom filled to the top
With emotions that often make me pop.

From high highs to low lows
I've dealt with the blows
As I work all my might
To put out the fights.

It is a challenge to do
All that the state asks me to
When each student comes from a home
Where he is allowed to aimlessly roam.

The neighborhoods where they live
Seems to always be ready to give
A twist on each life
That is often filled with strife.

In spite of all this,
I know that I will miss
The children's smiling faces,
As they work at their own paces.

Every morning I pray,
"God, help me find the way
To let these special kids know
That I truly care for them so."

--"Angel"

First Days of Teaching

Walking in the room for the very first time,
Grasping at the realization that it was finally mine
Staring at the shelves with books of knowledge all around
How was I going to get it into my students' hearts and minds?

Emotions swam within me
Excitement, peace and joy
The walls stared at me curiously
With such excitement they began to hum.

My creative side was calling within me
But it would have to wait
Lesson plans were calling me
Oh the excitement that flowed through me
My heart began to ache.

Looking back to that day
It seems so long ago.
Laughter draws me back
My students are tackling assignments with a grin
Mrs. K, Mrs. K, Mrs. K.
That word seems to never end.

I swoop from group to group
Answering more important questions
The day seems overwhelming and yet I am so content.
Smiles rise all around me, they finally grasped that concept.

I look around and see the world before me.
They come in all sizes, shapes, colors and backgrounds
Their eyes pleading with mine, please don't let us down
We long to make a difference just show us how.

The world seems to stop around me
I've lost all sense of time
I watch their little faces
Staring back at mine.
I look above and thank Him
Yes, it has been worth every moment
And every single dime.

--"Christie"

Those Days
I remember when I made my decision
Ten years ago now
It was one of those days
A clear moment in time
Always smiling,
Very positive,
Achieving my goals,
It was one of those days.

Ten years later,
First year of teaching,
Those days seem fewer now
Smiles disappearing,
Negativity coming out,
Achievement becomes frustration.

Amongst the worst of days
A little something occurs
The day miraculously changes
To one of those days
An email from an old student,
Recognition from a colleague
Children performing their talents
One innocent pure moment in time
That's all it takes

And the day changes
To one of those days.
--"Savannah"

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Educational Preparation

2001—2004	Andrews University School of Education Berrien Springs, MI	Ph.D., Leadership
1975—1979	Indiana University School of Education, Graduate Division South Bend, IN	M.S., Secondary Education
1971—1975	Indiana University College of Arts and Sciences South Bend, IN	B.A., Biology, Secondary Ed.

Professional Experience

2000--	Indiana Wesleyan University College of Adult and Professional Studies Marion, IN	Adjunct Professor
2003--	Edinburgh Community High School Edinburgh, IN	Principal and Academy Director
2001—2003	Perley Elementary School South Bend, IN	Principal
1998—2001	John Adams High School South Bend, IN	Principal
1997—2000	Indiana University School of Education, Graduate Division South Bend, IN	Adjunct Professor

1996	James Whitcomb Riley High School Summer School Program South Bend, IN	Principal
1995—1998	James Whitcomb Riley High School South Bend, IN	Assistant Principal
1975—1995	School City of Mishawaka Mishawaka, IN	Classroom Teacher

Honors, Awards, and Recognition

2002 IndianaNext Grant Recipient
2001 Graduate, Indiana Principal Leadership Academy
2000 Indiana Association of School Principals Principal of the Year, District 2
1995 Mishawaka Education Foundation Grant Recipient
1995 20-year Service Award, School City of Mishawaka
1993 Indiana Teacher of the Year Semifinalist
1993 School City of Mishawaka Teacher of the Year
1993 Beiger Elementary/Junior High Teacher of the Year
1990 15-year Service Award, School City of Mishawaka
1979 Graduate Award for Excellence in Education, Indiana University
1975 Undergraduate Award for Excellence in Biology, Indiana University

Professional Organizations

American Educational Research Association
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Indiana Association of School Principals
National Association of Secondary School Principals

Published Work

Educator Perceptions of a Beginning Teacher Induction Program (pilot study) published on-line with Shirley Freed, 2002

Gender Equity Issues in Education (paper) written and presented with Donna Lamborn, 1997

A Staff Development Plan for Teaching the Seven Intelligences, written and presented with Edward Fleming, 1995

A Science Curriculum for K-12 Educators, written in collaboration with the Curriculum Team, School City of Mishawaka, 1994

Philosophy of Education, published simultaneously by School City of Mishawaka and Indiana Department of Education, 1993

Reaching for Excellence in Adolescent Development—the Beiger School Advisory Program (2 volumes), with Patricia Dieringer, 1993 (revised 1994)